

S E R M O N S

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS:

V I Z.

- | | |
|--|---|
| I. Virtue glorious, Vice infamous. | XIII. The Love of Enemies. |
| II. The Servitude of Sin. | XIV. Future Rewards proportionable to present Improvements. |
| III. Connection between Duty and Happiness. | XV. Propagation of the Gospel. |
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| VIII. Spiritual Worship. | XXI. The Duty of Benevolence and Brotherly Love, and the ill Effects of a Party Spirit. |
| IX. The Vanity and Vexation of irregular Desires. | |
| X. The Wisdom of regarding Counsel, and the Folly of rejecting it. | |
| XI, XII. The Causes and Consequences of intellectual Darkness. | |

By JOHN BALGUY, M. A.

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and Prebendary of SARUM.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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M,DCC.LX.

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TO HIS GRACE

THE MOST REVEREND

T H O M A S, SECKER,

By Divine Providence

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY,

Primate and Metropolitan of all *England*,

MY LORD,

AVING sometime ago
desired and obtained Per-
mission to inscribe this
Volume to your Grace, I am not
willing, and indeed ought not to
suppose it cancelled by the interven-
ing Change of your Situation. On
the contrary I conceive, that an In-
A 2 dulgence

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dulgence granted by the late Primate of York is in no Danger of being revoked by the now Primate of Canterbury. My Reason is, a firm Assurance, my Lord, that no outward Change can affect the Disposition of your Mind: That no Elevation, no Distinction will ever break into your Benevolence, or obstruct the Current of your Favour. I cannot forbear adding, though superfluous on the present Occasion, that your Humanity and your Dignity are well suited, and nobly matched; that the Goodness of your Heart crowns all your Honours, and fully corresponds to the Sublimity of your Station.

I presume not, my Lord, to congratulate either Church or State on your Grace's Promotion to the supreme See; which will often be done hereafter by fitter Hands: Neither
shall

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shall I swell this Epistle with the Loss sustained by your former Province, and the general Concern thereby occasioned. Such Points fall not within the Compass of my present Privilege; which extends no farther than to the Honour of dedicating a Book to my Diocesan Archbishop: And I entreat your Grace to consider the following Address in this Light. But a new Plea offering itself, which I could not foresee, I beg I may be allowed to insert it here.——Your Translation, my Lord, makes such an Attempt much more seasonable than I apprehended. I mean in respect of your Northern Friends; by whom Memorials of all Kinds will naturally be coveted on this Occasion. Though the Original be deeply graven on their Minds; so deeply, as never to be effaced; yet Copies and Representations will be studiously sought,

A 3

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sought, and every Shadow of Resemblance prized. A favourable Circumstance for the imperfect Draught here humbly presented!

MY LORD,

MY Desire of prefixing your Grace's Name to this Collection seems to me so just and innocent an Ambition, that I am doubtful whether it would become me to make any Apology. But I should never be able to excuse myself to the Publick, if I prefixed your *Name only*, and took not the least Notice of the many Honours and Virtues which adorn it. They would even resent such a Rudeness; and at least conclude me either shamefully ignorant, or quite insensible. So fair an Occasion, so fruitful a Subject, so favourite a Character, would prove so many distinct
Pro-

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Provocations, if passed over in profound Silence.

On the other Hand, I am no Stranger to that Delicacy of Sentiment, which, on such Occasions, and such only, makes your Grace hard of Access. Whatever wears even the Look of Praise, however soberly and severely clad, is in Danger of finding all Avenues shut. Should I say what I know freely and fully; though I might produce Vouchers without Number, I should certainly offend. So that it seems no easy Matter to steer an equal Course between your Grace's Displeasure and publick Censure.—If I wrote, my Lord, to *your* Eye, or to *your* Ear, few Words would suffice; and perhaps the fewer the better. But my Readers will expect more; and pardon me, if I own myself very unwilling to disappoint

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them.

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them. In Truth, my principal Aim is to sketch out a Portrait for their Use, and gladly would I engage their Attention, and excite their Emulation. — Nevertheless, I shall not pretend to expatiate ; will not take upon me to anticipate History, or return the National Voice. All I ask is, to be indulged a few plain Truths ; a little chaste Praise ; a deliberate, guarded Address ; confining myself to the Outlines of a Character, the Completion of which is beyond my Pretensions, and above my Hand.

Great is the Satisfaction, my Lord, and great the Benefit, which your Clergy derive from the Wisdom of your Instruction, and the Lustre of your Example. You select the most sacred and important Truths, and impress them with a Zeal proportionable to their Moment. I am
scarce

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scarce willing to mention, much less to insist on the Graces of your Eloquence; which however they may charm our Senses and Affections, cannot enlighten our Understandings. This End is obtained by Means much more effectual. It is chiefly by strong Reason and masculine Sense that our Assent is gained, and our Admiration excited. The pure Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity thus enforced and recommended, strike irresistibly, and bear down all Opposition: They engage the Attention of the most obdurate Minds, and triumph over the Prejudices and Passions of Mankind.

And yet, my Lord, what I have mentioned is but Part, an inferior Part, of your Eloquence. The Strength of your Arguments, the Force of your Exhortations, and the Candour of your Address, must all
give

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give way to the Power and Prevalence of your illustrious Example. This is a living Proof of the Dignity of Virtue, and the divine Excellence of our Religion. A Proof, which universally strikes the Eye, and sinks into the Heart. Nothing has been, nothing will be able to resist the Influence and Enchantment of such a Character. — Though I may not, without inexcusable Presumption, attempt to draw this Character at length; yet a few short Characteristics, or rather faint Shadowings, may perhaps be ventured; provided they be, what I affirm they are, taken from Life. Most certainly, on this Occasion, I should not dare to indulge my Fancy, or delineate at Random.

How can I pass unobserved that genuine Affection for Truth, which your Grace cultivates and cherishes
with

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with so much Care; and which indeed seems to lie at the Root of all that is excellent? Whenever, or wherever this Object appears, how strict your Attention, how inflexible your Attachment! Whether derived from the Principles of Nature, or the Powers of Reason, or the Voice of Revelation, it never fails of a welcome Admission to your unprejudiced Mind: There producing those generous Fruits, those consummate Virtues and Graces, which bless Mankind, and do Honour to human Nature.—More particularly, what solemn Reverence for the Laws of Heaven, what signal Fidelity to God and Man! For the Honour of God what noble Regard, what exalted Zeal; for the Welfare of Man, what earnest Care, what vigilant Concern! What warm Desires and strenuous Endeavours to check the Overflow-
ings

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ings of Immorality and Irreligion ;
and how compassionate a Sense of
their dismal Effects ! What an active,
vigorous, and constant Propension to
Works of Benignity, Mercy, and
Charity ; and what Countenance,
what Encouragement given to all the
Arts and *Labours of Love* !—Per-
mit me to add, what Serenity of
Mind, and Sanctity of Manners !
What Elegance, Sweetness, and Fe-
licity of Temper ! What easy Con-
descension, cordial Affability, and
fervent Good-Will ! I am speaking,
my Lord, of no barren Accomplish-
ments. In Truth and Fact, that re-
fined Humanity, that social Com-
placency, that amiable Tenderneſs,
that invincible Kindneſs, which a-
dorn your Conduct, and ſhine
through your whole Converſation,
have produced moſt deſirable Ef-
fects. You are not only beloved,
admired,

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admired, honoured, in every Part of your Province; but, by your Means, Men civilize and reform, and even become enamoured of Virtue and Religion.

It is much to be lamented, that many true Friends and sincere Votaries of Religion should serve its Cause, and consult its Credit, less effectually than lies in their Power. I speak not of the *Matter* of our Duty, but the *Manner* of discharging it. Let Essentials by all Means be principally regarded; but let not Circumstantials be despised. Propriety of Conduct and Decency of Action ought not to be reputed Points of small Moment, if they contribute, as they certainly do, to adorn Religion, and give it an amiable Figure in the Eye of the World. Many worthy Performances and laudable Endeavours are daily depreciated

DEDICATION.

ated by a negligent, absurd, disagreeable Manner. Affected Singularities, injudicious Austerities, ungraceful Appearances, with other Circumstances of the like Nature, are very apt to cloud Virtue, blemish her Form, and darken her Aspect. An Injury to her Cause not easily repaired: For it must needs be difficult to reconcile those Minds which are alienated by Prejudice and Disgust.—This I was tempted to observe, as the Case appears directly the Reverse of your Grace's Example; wherein we find, eminently displayed, all the Beauty of Virtue, and all the Dignity of Religion. You have the Happiness to practise and recommend both with peculiar Advantage, and singular Success; to exhibit them in their true Colours, and native Charms; and even to render their Loveliness yet more lovely,

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lovely, by engaging Arts and superior Address.—And what Wonder if such Qualities and such Conduct produce suitable Effects, both public and private? Or what Wonder, my Lord, if Them who honour Virtue, She will honour? If that Lustre which you have thrown upon Her, be strongly reflected on yourself, and spread a Glory round about you? In a Word, if you possess her Honours, and partake of her Triumphs, without Opposition, without Interruption, and without Envy? So grateful is Virtue! and so faithful also the Public, in doing Justice and paying Homage to distinguished Merit!

What follows, my Lord, not only seems to claim a Place, but cannot be omitted without a Crime. I mean that exemplary Love of your Country, which burns so nobly in your own Breast, and has kindled or spread
that

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that generous Passion all around you. You teach us by all fit Means and Methods, not only to be good *Clergymen*, but good *Englishmen*; not only to be wise and *virtuous*, but brave and *free*. You set before us in the strongest Light the Charms of Liberty, and the execrable Evils of Tyranny and Bondage; enflaming our Minds with an ardent Love for the one, and an unconquerable Aversion for the other. From your Grace we learn, how to oppose the Arts and Intrigues of *Modern Rome* with the Spirit of *Antient Romans*, and chearfully to sacrifice even our Lives and Fortunes to the Preservation of our Liberties, and the Defence of our Country.

Tho' you was not seen, my Lord, like some of your Predecessors, at the Head of an *Army*; yet with greater Propriety, and more Effect, you appeared at the Head of an *Association*,
formed

DEDICATION.

formed with the noblest Views, and productive of the happiest Fruits. This seasonable Expedient, so vigorously undertaken and resolutely pursued by our loyal County, how did it animate and excite the whole Nation! So just a Precedent, so auspicious an Example, was not to be withstood. It prevailed far and wide; spread from County to County; reviving that Love of Liberty, and rekindling that martial Ardor, which on former Occasions so often distinguished us, and by the Blessing of Heaven so often saved us.

That memorable Zeal, those glorious Efforts exerted by your Grace on this trying Occasion, never will, never can be forgotten by *Englishmen*, till they be conquered and enslaved. And I believe, my Lord, you will not think it worth a single Wish to be remembered any longer. If ever we are reduced to a State of

DEDICATION.

Vassalage, which gracious Heaven avert, our Histories will soon be destroyed, our Monuments perished, and even your Grace's Name and Character sink into Oblivion.

Amidst great Plenty of Materials, here, my Lord, I stop; deaf to the further Calls and Invitations of my Subject. A Subject, if I mistake not, fitter for a Volume than a Dedication. I even chuse to conclude abruptly, rather than seem to neglect my Promise, or violate my Privilege: and therefore only add my most earnest Wishes for the long Continuance of a Life, so peculiarly dear to this Province, and of such general Importance to the whole Kingdom. I am,

My LORD,

Your Grace's

Most humble,

Most obedient, and

Most devoted Servant,

JOHN BALGUY.



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S E R M O N I.

Virtue glorious, Vice infamous.

PROVERBS III. Last Verse.

*The Wise shall inherit Glory, but Shame
shall be the Promotion of Fools.*

TH O' it be true that all Kinds SERM.
of Wisdom redound to Mens I.
Praise, and all Kinds of Folly
to their Shame and Dishonour;
yet in the Sense of our royal Author, both
the Propositions in my Text will be found
more remarkably verified. For with him
Wisdom constantly signifies Virtue and
Religion, and Folly the Reverse. And
that nothing is more glorious than Virtue;
nothing more dishonourable than Vice,
will, I hope, sufficiently appear in the fol-
V O L. I. B lowing

SERM. lowing Inquiry.—But let it be premised,
 I that true Glory is a Motive of real Worth,
 and which ever has had, and ever must
 have, great Weight with Mankind; and
 perhaps the greatest Weight with the best
 and noblest Minds. Even a Part of it has
 had so much Influence, as to produce some
 of the most illustrious Actions, and to form
 some of the finest and most amiable Cha-
 racters in all Antiquity. And if *the Praise*
of Men could operate thus forcibly; how
 much more forcibly, had it been accom-
 panied and enforced with *the Praise of God*.
 For tho' these good Heathens had Gods of
 their own, whose Favour and Approbation
 they sought; yet what could avail the Ap-
 probation of *such* Gods? whose own Cha-
 racters were generally reputed very defec-
 tive, to say no worse.—But to proceed;
 Glory and Infamy are evidently three-
 fold; as consisting in the Approbation,
 or Disapprobation, *first*, of our *own Minds*;
secondly, of our *Fellow-Creatures*; and *third-*
ly, of the *Supreme Being*, the great Searcher
 of Hearts. Which let us briefly consider
 in this Order, as Motives to Virtue, and
 Dissuasives from Vice. The

First Branch of true Glory is the Appro-
 bation of our own Minds. Concerning
 wh ch

which it may perhaps be doubted, whether SERM.
any Glory or Honour can be derived from I.
Self-Approbation. Considering the Partialities and Prepossessions of Self-Love, it may justly be asked, how any Man can be trusted to judge his own Case, or to determine any thing relating to his own Character. And indeed it must be owned, as far as the Publick is concerned, that no Man's Word is ordinarily to be taken in his own Behalf. The Publick has nothing to do with Mens private Approbations, of which it cannot pretend to judge; nor indeed of any thing directly but their Actions: According to which, or the Appearance of which it frames Characters, and raises or depresses every Man's Reputation. Nevertheless, the Approbation of a Man's own Mind, or, in other Words, the *Testimony* of his *Conscience* is, or may be, not only a comfortable Circumstance, but really honourable and glorious. For tho' Men are greatly and constantly biased in their own Favour, and very prone to bend their Judgment towards their Affections; yet it is in their Power, in a great Measure at least, to judge fairly and impartially; and a wise and good Man will not fail to make use of that Power. He

SERM. will guard as carefully as he can against

I. every Instance of Self-Delusion, and even
make Allowances for that selfish Bias before-mentioned. And tho' in examining and judging himself he cannot pretend to Exactness, yet in the main he will *judge righteous Judgment*. And in order hereto he is peculiarly qualified, notwithstanding the foregoing Disadvantage; as being not only conscious of his own Intentions, but well apprised of the Grounds and Motives whereon he acted; Points undiscoverable for the most part by other Men, and known only to God and a Man's own Conscience. Tho' therefore the World be less partial; yet wanting that Light, and that Information, which every Individual possesses concerning his own Conduct; it must often happen that private Approbation is more just than publick, and by Consequence, of greater Moment. However, every Man must be allowed capable, in all ordinary Cases, of forming a Judgment of his own Actions. And indeed without such a Power, the great Principle of Conscience would turn to small Account; or rather be a mere Word without a Meaning.—The Result then of such a Judgment is the Approbation of Virtue, and the Condemnation

demnation of Vice; the one being amiable S E R M.
and excellent, the other vile and odious I.
in its own Nature, The virtuous Man

therefore must approve and applaud his own Actions as far as they answer his Character. Such a Sentence is as natural and unavoidable, as the Preference of Light to Darkness. No Rule, no Degree of Humility can prevent or stop it. Fearless of Consequences, Conscience must and will do Justice in a Man's own Breast; and whenever he does well, congratulate and commend him. No Instance of virtuous Conduct can it possibly blame as such; however it may blame it as being defective, or not virtuous enough: An Allay which cleaves to all human Characters, and which no Man's Conscience can overlook or forget. In short; tho' fully sensible of human Imperfection, and ready to acknowledge it; it cannot fail of approving and extolling all worthy Actions, virtuous Dispositions, and generous Conduct.—Is then this Voice, this Verdict of a good Man's Conscience really glorious? Can such secret Praises, such silent Whispers, do him Honour, and dignify his Character? How different from the loud Voice of Fame, and the Acclamations of the Publick! Very dif-

SERM. ferent indeed, and vastly inferior, if Glory is

I. to be estimated by Noise and Sound. But

~ this is not the Case; as we shall plainly perceive, if we examine the Idea. True Glory can only arise from, and consist in the Approbation of competent Judges. And wherever such be found; whether the Applause be private or publick, soft or loud, is of small Moment; the Honour is really done, and must accrue to the Agent. Now that Conscience is truly a competent Judge, and in some respects peculiarly qualified, has been already shewn; and from hence it follows, that its Testimony is really and proportionably glorious. By good Men it has ever been prized and esteemed accordingly; who have taken great Care to preserve it pure and inviolate, and refused to sacrifice it to any worldly Considerations. It has been held sacred, and highly revered, by the very Heathens themselves; who have represented a Man of Honour and Virtue as scorning to commit a base Action, tho' he was sure of concealing it both from Gods and Men. So great a Regard they thought due to the Dignity of Reason, and the Authority of Conscience. And indeed to some of them, the very Turpitude of a villainous Action

ap-

appeared so shocking, that they could not SERM.
endure it even in Idea. Nothing could I.
tempt them out of their Integrity, or make
them give up the Praise and Approbation of
their own Minds. A Way of thinking
that might have become even the Purity
and Sanctity of the Christian Religion.
And indeed we find the Apostle himself
thus *rejoicing* and triumphing in the *Testi-*
mony of his Conscience; solicitous, above all
things, to preserve it clear and *void of Of-*
fence.

And as Virtue receives and enjoys this
internal Honour, so Vice meets with Dis-
grace, and is branded with Infamy even in
a Man's own Breast. He finds his Con-
duct disapproved and condemned by an in-
visible Judge, whose Sentence he can nei-
ther evade nor alter. Sometimes perhaps
he may be able to drown the Voice of
Conscience, and stifle its Reproaches for
a while; but at proper Intervals, they will
be heard, and fill the Offender with Shame
and Confusion. When a Man's Actions
are at Variance with his Judgment, and
he lives in Opposition to the Light of his
own Mind; how should he ever be satisfied
with himself? What can be more disho-
nourable, what more ignominious, than to

SERM. go on self-condemned, and be sentenced a
I. Criminal by his own Heart? And what
 renders his Case yet more shameful, is, that
while he is rebelling against Reason and
Conscience, he is engaged in a vile Subjec-
tion to his Lusts and Passions, and lives a
miserable Slave of his own making.—The
Shame attending vicious Courses is remark-
ably felt in the first Stage; insomuch that
young Sinners are startled even in Secret.
If their Dispositions be in any Degree in-
genuous, they are scandalized at the En-
trance into a sinful Course. The Disho-
nour and Deformity of unworthy Actions
are painful and shocking; and they find it
difficult to overcome the Sense of Shame,
and the native Candor of their own Minds,
By vicious Practice that Sensibility is in-
deed lessened, but seldom lost. Habitual
Offenders are subject to frequent Returns
of Self-Displeasure; and there are certain
Times and Seasons, when even the most
profligate Sinners are apt to think meanly
and contemptibly of themselves. And no
Wonder, considering how they debase
themselves, and what Violence they offer
to the chief Powers and Principles of Hu-
man Nature. But

Secondly,

Secondly, If we take Glory in the com- SERM.
mon and popular Sense of the Word, as I.
it signifies the Approbation and Esteem of
the Publick; nothing gives so fair a Title
to it as Virtue, nothing so justly forfeits it
as Vice. No amiable Character was ever
heard of, where Virtue was not the prin-
cipal Ingredient: And where it has been
wanting, the greatest Abilities, and most
shining Talents have produced nothing but
Infamy. Virtue has Charms to win the
hardest Hearts, and subdue the most sa-
vage Dispositions; to excite Veneration
wherever it appears, and to extort Praise
and Homage even from the fiercest Bar-
barians; to disarm the Rage and Cruelty
of Tyrants, and make Malice itself relent.
These glorious Effects are intirely owing
to that intrinsick Loveliness, that Divine
Excellence, which peculiarly belong to it,
as I before took notice. — Considering how
useful, how beneficial it is to the Publick;
how it promotes the Ends of Society, and
conduces to its Peace and Prosperity; well
may it be expected that Virtue should be
esteemed, and had in Honour in all Com-
munities, and in all Ages. Nothing can
be found or conceived capable of turning
to

SERM. to so good an Account; forasmuch as it

I. yields directly the most valuable Fruits; provides for all States, suits all Functions, and best answers all the Relations of Life. Not one laudable Practice, not one meritorious Action can be thought of, which does not spring from Virtue and Religion as its proper Fountain. From hence flow all those Deeds, and all those Distinctions, which form the noblest Characters, and make so delightful a Figure in History. Hence chiefly Men are enabled to acquit themselves well and worthily upon all Occasions; to fill and adorn every Station, and derive not only Benefits, but Honour to their Country. How just a Claim then has Virtue to be honoured itself, and had in Reverence by all Mankind! — The Truth is, its very Enemies cannot think ill of it. Nay they must, even against their Wills, have a secret Esteem and Veneration for it. Tho' they may revile it outwardly, they are, and must be, conscious at the same time of its Worth and Excellence. But this is not all: They often speak well of it, whatever be their Motives; and are frequently heard to praise Virtue, while they are practising Vice.

One

One Way or other they are compelled, in SERM.
some Degree, to do it Justice. I.

It is not to be doubted, but the Honest and the Upright are revered by Knaves; the Kind and Charitable by hard-hearted Misers; and the Meek and Merciful by Tyrants and Oppressors. Tho' they have not a Heart to imitate such Characters; yet they cannot avoid thinking of them, at least, with Esteem and Respect. — But here perhaps it may be asked, if Virtue be thus universally honour'd, whence those Hardships and Discouragements which it has so often endured? How commonly has it been found not only discountenanced, but persecuted and oppressed? In short, what Idea more familiar than that of suffering Virtue? To which I answer, that this is no way inconsistent with the Doctrine before us. So far from it, that Virtue has ever become more glorious by Suffering. But when it stands in the Way of evil Men, and evil Designs, what Wonder if it be opposed at any Rate? The Frowns of Oppression, and the Storms of Persecution, it naturally expects from that Quarter; and that without any Diminution of its Credit; on the Contrary, they

SERM. they render it more venerable and more

I. illustrious. Nothing can redound more to
its Honour than such Treatment from
such Hands; especially considering how
generally it is admired and revered by its
very Persecutors. In a Word, however
it may succeed in other Respects, it never
did, never can fail of the real Approba-
tion of Mankind.

On the other Hand, Vice, however it
may prevail in Practice, is sure to be dis-
approved and condemned. Amidst all
the Corruptions of Mankind it cannot rise
into Credit and Esteem; but exposes Men
to Infamy and Contempt, and utterly ruins
their Characters. It is in its own Nature
so black and deformed; so odious and mis-
chievous; so fatal to Individuals, and so
pernicious to publick States and Commu-
nities; that even its Votaries dare not to
be Advocates, nor open their Lips in Fa-
vour of it. Of all the Evils which infest
Society; of all the Crosses and Calamities
which embitter human Life; much the
greater Part is to be placed to the Account
of Vice and Wickedness. It sets Man a-
gainst Man, and Man against himself;
darkens his Understanding, and perverts
his

his Judgments ; weakens his Hands, and SERM.
corrupts his Heart. It makes Men inor- I.

dinate, disobedient, licentious, dissolute ;
Contemners of all social Obligations, and
Violaters of all Order, Harmony, and Peace.

It incapacitates them for the Service of the
Publick, and renders them unfit to be em-
ployed or trusted ; dreaded by Some, de-
tested by Others, and disliked by all. —

This I say is manifestly the natural Ten-
dency of Vice, and these the Fruits which
it ordinarily produces. What Pretension
then can it possibly have to Honour and
and Esteem ? If the Condition and Cir-
cumstances of wicked Men happen to co-
ver them from open Contempt, or gain
them the Appearance of Honour and Re-
spect ; it can be no more than the Ap-
pearance : For in reality they are pitied
and despised ; nor can it possibly be other-
wise. It is in no Man's Power to have a
real Value and Esteem for them ; unless
it be on the Account of some Virtues
mixed with their Vices. This may, and
often does alter the Case : But considered
as vicious they can never be esteemed.
Their real Portion is Shame and Contempt,
both without and within ; their Character
agrees with the Testimony of Conscience,
and

SERM. and the Sentiments of the Publick are
I. conformable to their own.

Thirdly, The third and principal Branch of true Glory is the Approbation of God himself; the great Lover of Righteousness, and Patron of all Virtue. His Approbation of Virtue, and Abhorrence of Vice, are so clear and certain both from Reason and Revelation, that it is in no Man's Power to doubt of it. An All-perfect Being must necessarily approve, in the highest Degree, the most amiable and most excellent Thing in the World; and he must equally detest the most odious and abominable. Can a Being infinitely good, not delight in Goodness? Or He who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, shew it any Favour? If any Confirmation was needful, we might appeal to all his Sanctions. The Sum and Substance of the former is to oblige Men to *eschew Evil, and do Good*; to purify their Manners, and make them Proficients in Virtue. And the latter are calculated for the same Ends; to lead Men to their Duty, their Happiness, and their Perfection, by working on their Hopes and Fears, and drawing them by the strongest and most powerful Motives.

tives. Nothing therefore is plainer, than SERM.
that Virtue is most acceptable, and Vice I.
most odious in the Sight of God. — We
may further consider the inestimable Value of God's Approbation, as being the highest Pitch and the utmost Perfection of all Glory; not to mention the mighty Advantages consequent thereupon, which are not my present Subject. And surely we cannot be insensible, what an Honour it must be to the Children of Men, to have their Conduct approved by an all-perfect, unerring Judge! The Worth of true Glory, whatever it be, must rise in Proportion to the Wisdom and Dignity of the Person by whom it is conferred. Even among ourselves, is not the good Opinion of the wisest and worthiest Men most coveted? But, alas! what is the good Opinion of the wisest Men, if compared with the Approbation of the Supreme Being? Which as much exceeds theirs, as Divine Perfections exceed human Infirmities. It is but very imperfectly that Men can judge of the Merits of each other. The true Springs of Action are unknown, and the Secrets of the Heart impenetrable by *Them*. Their Insight into Mens Characters

SERM. ters being thus short and superficial, they

I. easily may, and frequently do misjudge.

And to this they are still more liable, on account of those various Prejudices which are so apt to mislead them. For they are often more governed by Affection, or Disaffection, than by real Evidence, and the Truth of the Case. But nothing of this kind can possibly obstruct or bias the divine Understanding. As God is omniscient, so he is perfectly impartial. He is the great Searcher of Hearts, and penetrates into the inmost Recesses of our Souls. Not a Motive can offer, not a Purpose be formed, not a Thought stir, unperceived by Him; but the whole Process of the Mind is naked and open in his Sight. Every Man's Character therefore must appear to him in its true Light, and genuine Colours. So that from his Approbation they derive the fullest and firmest Sanction, the infallible Stamp of Truth. And what can be conceived more glorious than such a Divine Attestation? Can the Ambition of either Men or Angels rise higher than to be approved and applauded by the great Judge of Heaven and Earth? Compared to this, how inconsiderable is the Praise of
all

all Mankind, or even the united Applause of the whole Creation? Let any Man be supposed at the great Day to receive the Approbation of the whole World then assembled; and even to hear his Praise re-founded by the whole Host of Heaven; so vast an Honour would fall infinitely short of that Divine Encomium, that single Sentence specified in the Gospel — *Well done good and faithful Servant; enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* — It may scarce seem needful to add, that the Demerit and the Infamy of Sin and Wickedness will then be rendered most conspicuous. It is not possible to express the horrible Shame and Confusion which will then cover the Wicked, when their Characters are publicly summed up and sealed by the universal Judge. Not an Eye will they dare to lift up towards him whom they dishonoured in this Life; whose Authority they insulted, and whose Laws they set at naught. The Consciousness of their Presumption and Impiety will then overwhelm their Souls with Shame and Dread, and Remorse unspeakable; and this will be their Portion and *Promotion* for ever.

SERM. Upon the Whole, to pretend to despise

I. the good Opinions of Mankind, is vain Affectation; to slight the Testimony of our Consciences, is extreme Folly; but to neglect and disregard the Approbation of Heaven, is desperate Madness. For besides that all our Hopes depend hereupon, it is, considered in itself, infinitely desirable. Our natural Inclinations are so far from being crossed and obstructed by Religion, that the best and noblest of them can be gratified no other Way. The Desire of true Glory is one of the most generous Inclinations that belong to the Minds of Men: But how miserably do we delude ourselves, when we seek for it in the Paths of Sin? Where none ever was, or ever will be found, worthy of our Ambition. It is Virtue only that can answer such a Demand; that can procure true Honour, and immortal Fame. As it shines at all Times with its own Rays, and even sheds a Lustre over this present Life; so an *Inheritance of Glory* awaits it in the next; and that of the purest and the noblest Kind. What inexpressible Honours will there crown the Heads of the Righteous! What mutual Joy and Exultation, what

what Gratulations from Saints and Angels, SERM.
with the World's Redeemer at their Head ! I.

In fine, what Praise from God himself !
What Honours in his Presence ! What
Glories at his Right-hand ! His faithful
Servants will ever be most precious in his
Sight. *Them that honoured him he will
honour in a most peculiar Manner ; make
them shine as the Brightness of the Firma-
ment, and as the Stars for ever and ever.*



SERMON II.

The Servitude of Sin.

JOHN. VIII. 34.

Jesus answered them, verily verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth Sin, is the Servant of Sin.

THESE Words are a Part of SERM. II. one of our Saviour's Conferences with the *Jews*; wherein he had been informing those who believed on him, how they might become *his Disciples indeed*; namely, by *continuing in his Word*: Nor barely in the Belief or Profession of it; but in a stedfast Conformity of their Minds and Manners thereto. The Consequence of which we find set forth in the Verse immediately following;

C 3

SERM. ing; and ye shall know the Truth, and the

II. *Truth shall make you free.* The Jews mis-

taking his Meaning, and being startled at any thing that looked like an Imputation of Servitude, presently answered, that they had no Occasion for the Freedom he offered them. *We be Abraham's Seed, say they, and were never in Bondage to any Man; how sayest thou then, ye shall be made free?* To undeceive them therefore, our Saviour gives them to understand, that however free they might be in a civil or political Sense, (tho' even in that respect they had then no Reason to boast) yet in a moral Sense, they were certainly not so. Supposing them as independent of all foreign Powers as they pretended, or imagined; yet might they not groan under a domestic Bondage? Might they not be subject to the Dominion and Tyranny of Sin? To assure them that this was a true Subjection, a real Bondage, he proceeds in the Words of my Text; *Verily, verily I say unto you, Whosoever committeth Sin, is the Servant of Sin.* — Abstracting from the Occasion of these remarkable Words; I shall go on to explain and account for the general Proposition contained in them. Accordingly I shall

First,

First, Endeavour to shew the perpetual SERM.
and unavoidable Connexion between II.
Sin and Servitude. And

Secondly, I shall point out some peculiar Properties and Circumstances in the Servitude of Sin, tending to deter us from it, and excite our Resolutions against it.

First, I am to shew the perpetual and unavoidable Connexion between Sin and Servitude. — We find in Scripture that a State of Sin is constantly represented as a State of Servility and Slavery; that Sinners are considered as Captives and Vassals; and Sin as a Master, a Ruler, a Tyrant. It is described as *reigning* in us; as *having Dominion over us*; as holding us in *Captivity*. The natural, carnal Man is said to be *sold under Sin*, and his Conversion is called *being made free from Sin*. *Know ye not*, says the Apostle, *that to whom ye yield yourselves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are to whom ye obey: whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness?* Hence it appears, that serve and obey we must; either Sin, or Righteousness; but with this material Difference,

SERM. as will be shewn afterwards, that one Service is intolerable Slavery, and the other perfect Freedom. The Laws of Righteousness are so many wise Rules essential to our Happiness, and directly tending to Liberty; the Laws of Sin, Chains, and Fetters, Misery and Bondage. Conformably hereto we are to understand the Words of my Text, and all other Expressions of the like Nature; namely, that a State of Sin is a State of real Servitude; and that of the vilest, and most grievous Kind.

But it may be requisite to give a more distinct Account of this Matter, and to shew briefly how and why Sin and Servitude are inseparable. That *natural Liberty*, that Free-will, as it is commonly called, which constitutes Man an Agent, can never be lost, whatever Sins he may commit. If any Man be supposed to lose his Liberty in this Sense; the Consequence would be, that he could not possibly sin any more. For wanting this necessary Power, he could never do either well or ill; or to speak more properly, he could do nothing at all; and were this the Case, instead of saying that Sin brings a Man into Bondage, or makes a Slave of him; it should

should be said, that it turns an Agent into a Patient, and transforms the Man into a mere Machine. Most evident therefore it is, that this Liberty can never be destroyed; not even in the greatest and most inveterate Sinners. — If then it be asked, what Liberty that is which appears concerned in the Case before us; I answer, a *Moral Liberty*, if it may be so called. Whatever it be called, the Thing itself is most plain and certain. By sinning, such an additional Weight is laid upon the Will; the Inducements and Temptations to Sin grow so much stronger; that tho' Men can still refrain, still chuse; yet they find themselves greatly perplexed and embarrassed in their Choice. When they have sinned for some time, they find a Difficulty in refraining; afterwards a greater; and at last, a moral Impossibility.

The Force of Custom is very great quite through the Animal Creation. All living Creatures are much affected by it, and determined as it were, to a certain Course of Action. What they have done before, they are most apt, and most inclined to do still: insomuch that they are very hardly brought out of a Track to which they have been long accustomed.

And

SERM. And thus it is even with Man ; who con-

II. continually finds and feels the Power and Prevalence of Custom. Even in Things of a mechanical Consideration, wherein the Mind is little or nothing concerned ; Custom gives a Readiness and a Facility not to be acquired without it. And tho' it be much harder to account for it, the Case is evidently the same in respect of the Operations of the Mind. Use and Practice always leave an Impression proportionable to their Continuance. By repeated Acts, Habits are formed ; and every Habit becomes, as it were a natural Propension. Hence Things, otherwise difficult, are not only rendered easy to be done, but hard to be omitted. The Mind finds itself insensibly engaged, and its Faculties, in some measure, determined and confined.

And as we feel and confess the Force of Habits in general, so we cannot but be sensible that sinful ones are peculiarly powerful. The Corruption of our Nature, whencesoever it be derived, is itself a strong Bent, a prevailing Attachment : and when Custom is added to it, the Difficulty must needs be doubled. The Stream of our natural Inclinations is hereby swelled, and made more rapid ; and,
by

by Consequence, less capable of being either SERM.
opposed, or diverted. The mighty Power II.
of sinful Habits is elegantly represented
in the Words of the Prophet. *Can the
Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard
his Spots? Then may ye also do Good, that
are accustomed to do Evil.* Tho' this ought
not to be understood literally and strictly;
yet it can mean no less, than that vici-
ous Habits are exceedingly hard to be
cured: that they take deep Root in the
Mind, and are never plucked up without
extreme Difficulty. — Since then the Ty-
ranny of Custom is acknowledged and
complained of by all Mankind; since it
is generally allowed, that by the mere
Force of Habit a Man may become a
Slave to almost any Thing; how much
more Reason have we to apprehend and
confess the heavier Bondage of Sin?
Where corrupt Nature and confirmed
Custom join their Powers, and pull both
the same Way, how hard must it be to
resist them? They are indeed always con-
querable; but how seldom conquered?
How strong must be that Resolution, how
vigorous that Effort of Mind, by which
such a Victory is gained! When a Man
moves not only down a steep Descent, but
in

SERM. in a beaten Track; it must be very difficult to retreat, or even to stop. In short, where Sin has taken Possession of the Mind, and worked itself into an inveterate Habit; it gains an established Mastery, and a kind of absolute Dominion.

But this is not all: for it operates antecedently to the Formation of Habit. At the very Instant of Commission, the Sinner enters into Servitude; and his Captivity commences that Moment. His first Compliance with a sinful Temptation is a Violation of his Liberty. I am still speaking of that *Moral Liberty* abovementioned; which consists in an intire Disengagement from every thing that his Reason disapproves. According to which Account, the least Attachment to an irregular Object wounds his Freedom, and in some measure entangles him. When a Man is tempted into Sin; or, in the Apostles Word, *when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed*; by that very Act of Compliance he yields, submits, and surrenders himself into the Power and Possession of a new Master. He so far resigns his Authority; and, as it were, sets his Hand to the Alienation of his own Liberty. Whoever obeys the Impulse of

a sinful Passion, or the Instigation of a criminal Appetite; must do it in Opposition to his Reason, Judgment, Duty, and Interest. And this he would never consent to, never endure to think of, while his Mind was perfectly free and disengaged. It is the chief Glory and Prerogative of Man's Nature, that he is possessed of such Principles, and enabled to follow their Direction. A fixed Power, and a constant Inclination to pursue the Dictates of Reason without Deviation, or Disturbance, is the Perfection of a Moral Agent. In the very Nature of the Thing, wherever Reason resides, it ought to govern; as being essentially supreme. And it is equally evident that those inferior Principles, the animal Appetites and Affections, were made to be governed, and kept in Subjection. Whenever this Order is inverted, the Consequence is, and must be Confusion. For if these Lusts and Passions rebel, and prevail; they directly carry the Man away captive, and he finds himself in the Hands of Usurpers and Tyrants.—But this will further appear under the

SERM.
II.

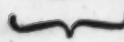
Second Head; wherein I proposed to point out some peculiar Properties and Circumstances

SERM. cumstances in the Servitude of Sin, tend-

II. ing to deter us from it, and excite our Resolutions against it. And *first* I would observe, how *dishonourable* it is; how mean and unbecoming; how unworthy of a Rational Creature. To serve Sin, is to serve the vilest, most deformed, and most detestable Thing in the whole World: It is to serve the Distemper of our Minds, and the Corruption of our Nature; the Root of all Evil, and the Ruin of a great Part of the Creation: It is to serve God's professed Enemy, and indeed the sole Object of his Indignation and Abhorrence: In fine, it is to serve that rebellious Spirit, who was its first Parent, its original Author; and whose great Engine it is in working the Destruction of Mankind. How then can we bear to submit to a Servitude so ignoble, so infamous as this! — God has endued us with sublime Power, and glorious Privileges; given us a Capacity for Wisdom and Virtue, and formed us after his own Image. Thus dignified, thus exalted, can we so far stoop and debase ourselves, as to serve Sin? Instead of improving these precious Gifts, shall we blot the Image of God, and bury our Honours in the Dust! *He has made and placed*

placed us *little lower than the Angels*: but SERM.
alas! we often find Ways and Means to II.
unmake ourselves, and shamefully sink
down almost to a Level with the Crea-
tures beneath us. The Mind of Man is
a rational, free, and immortal Spirit; vest-
ed with great Powers and Perfections, and
designed for greater. How can such a
Being as this subject itself to mere animal
Instincts, and become a Captive to blind
Lusts and brutish Passions? How mean,
how abject is that Man's Condition, who
chuses to be thus governed? Who groans
under a voluntary Bondage, and is a Slave
of his own making! — Nothing appears
more honourable, or more becoming, in
Wisdom's Eye, than keeping good Order
within, and maintaining the Authority of
a Man's own Mind. *He who ruleth his
Spirit*, is pronounced by Solomon *better
than he who taketh a City*. Many Cities
have been taken, many Provinces and
Kingdoms ingloriously conquered, by those
Men who never were their own Masters:
Heroes, forsooth! who in the very midst
of their Conquests, tamely passed under
the Yoke to their domineering Lusts, and
tyrannical Humours. While they drew
the Admiration, and dazled the Eyes of
Mankind;

SERM. Mankind; they were really in a baser, and

II.  more servile Condition than the meanest of their Captives. What availed the Number of their Victories, or the Pomp of their Triumphs; while they carried such untamed Rioters, such imperious Rebels within their own Bosoms? The quelling of these private Mutineers, the quieting these domestick Tumults and Commotions, would have been more for their Honour, than defeating the greatest Armies, and vanquishing all the Nations upon Earth. In short, to abandon Reason, and give up the Rein to Appetite and Passion, is the meanest and most ignominious State that Man can fall into. But

Secondly, as the Servitude of Sin is thus dishonourable, so it is no less troublesome and tormenting. Whenever a Man engages in a sinful Course of Life, he may justly be said to take his Leave of all true Peace and Tranquility of Mind. Besides that Remorse which is sure to seize him sooner or later; and which will prove at length the very *Gall of Bitterness*: he may expect great Disquiet, and continual Perplexity. However Sin may delude him at first, he will soon discover that he has sown Vanity, and must reap Vexation: soon
find

find himself hurried into many anxious Pursuits, and restless Undertakeings: tost about from Action to Action, from Project to Project, in Obedience to that Inclination which happens to be uppermost. Let him lay a serious Scheme, or form a beneficial Design: let him enter with full Purpose of Mind into the Pursuit of it: presently arises some irregular Appetite, which crosses his Way, and carries him transverse: which, like a wandering Vapour, leads him through By-Ways and unfrequented Places; till he is quite bewildred, and neither knows how to get backward nor forward. The unhappy Sinner has such a Variety of Lords and Masters, that his Task is never done, his Drudgery never at an End: and so rigorous they are, as seldom to allow him any Respite. It is required of him that he answer every Demand, and be ready at every Call; however foolish, or fantastick. He never knows one Minute beforehand what his Appetites and Passions will please to give him Leave to do next. Be their Orders never so senseless, or silly; he is bound, and must obey, at all Events. And what is still worse, he is frequently divided, and drawn many different Ways

SERM.
II.

SERM. at once : perplexed with inconsistent

II. Schemes, and distracted between opposite
 Demands. Let Ambition and Sloth, or
 Avarice and Luxury, prevail and fix in
 the same Breast; how must the Servant of
 Sin behave in such a Case? How compromise
 Matters between such rival Lusts,
 such repugnant Appetites? What Comfort,
 what Quiet could he find amidst the
 continual Cravings of his Purse and his
 Palate? Whoever pretends to serve two
 such Masters, shall satisfy neither; but
 will be sure most effectually to plague
 himself. — Tyranny is generally reputed
 the natural Aversion of Mankind. We
 pretend to detest it in all Shapes, and to
 dread the very Appearances of it. What
 think we then of those domestick Tyrants,
 our sinful Lusts; which are not only endured,
 but cherished by us; tho' they assume
 an absolute Sway, and rule us with a
 Rod of Iron? Which deprive us almost
 of our Liberties, and sometimes of our
 Lives; and break through all Laws both
 Divine and Human. If we are to be governed
 by Will and Humour, Appetite and Passion;
 what matters it whether it be at first,
 or at second Hand? If renouncing our
 Reason and Liberty, we are willing
 to

to wear Chains ; is it not a Point of small SERM.
Moment, who puts them on ? — We II.
might further take notice, what Trouble
is occasioned by that boisterous Affection
which is peculiarly called *Passion* : What
a Tumult it produces in a Man's whole
Frame : What Commotion in his Body,
and Confusion in his Mind : How it per-
verts his Faculties, and as it were trans-
ports the Man out of himself. What
Enjoyment, what Ease can he expect,
while such a Storm is shaking his Con-
stitution, and turning his Nature up-side-
down ? In short, wherever it gets the Mas-
tery, it not only robs a Man of his Liber-
ty, but renders every Comfort of his Life
precarious : placing him at the Mercy of
every little Accident, and never suffering
him to be secure of a Minutes Repose.
But

Thirdly ; considering the Dishonour and
Vexation to which Sin exposes Men, it
might well be expected, to make them
Amends, that it should prove very bene-
ficial, and yield them great Advantages of
some Kind or other. But alas ! the Ser-
vitude of Sin is likewise *unprofitable* ; and
not only unprofitable, but *pernicious*. Let
the Sinner examine and state his own

SERM. Case; let him compute fairly his Gains

II. and his Losses; what will he find at the

Foot of the Account? On the side of his Losses, Health, Liberty, Credit, Peace and Satisfaction of Mind; in a Word the chief Comforts of this Life, and all his Hopes in the next. On the side of his Gains, mere Cyphers; that is, a few broken Pleasures, or rather Shadows of Pleasure, which vanished *as a Morning Cloud*, and *as the early Dew* passed away. The Enjoyments of Sin are so very superficial; have so little Truth or Substance in them; give so little Content to the Mind; that they are not really sufficient Recompence for the Bondage of one Day. — But this is not the worst of the Case. The Service of Sin is not only unprofitable; but, in the highest Degree, dangerous and destructive. If a Man persevere in it, he is ruined to all Intents and Purposes: and vicious Habits are so very hard to be shaken off; that, at least, he runs a desperate Hazard. Some Services are limited to a certain Period of Time; and when that arrives, Men are at liberty in Course; but in the Service of Sin, the longer they are bound the faster they are, and the further from being loose. Every Sin they commit, strengthens

strengthens the Engagement, and weakens SERM.
themselves,—When a Man has been long II.
in Subjection to his Lufts and Passions, he
commonly finds his Spirits broken ; so far
at least, that he has seldom Vigour and Re-
solution enough to work his Deliverance,
He is become like a disabled Ship, which
floats along at the Mercy of the Winds
and Waves. A Gust of Humour, or a
Tide of Inclination, carries him this Way
or that, just as it happens. — Many and
great are even the present Inconveniencies
of a sinful Course of Life ; which con-
tinually exposes Men to Danger, and be-
trays them into Hardships of various Kinds.
It leads them into a thousand Snares, and
frequently involves them in inextricable
Difficulties. It puts them upon such At-
tempts, and engages them in such Mea-
sures ; the Consequence of which is al-
ways mischievous, and often fatal. The
Truth is, Vice and Security are utterly in-
consistent ; never did, nor never will
dwell together. The wicked Man has
nothing to trust to ; has never an Anchor
left, but Repentance ; and that he turns
his Back on, till it becomes useless.—Wis-
dom and Virtue are steady Principles, al-
ways to be depended on. A Man may

SERM. easily know what to expect from them,

II. and how they will prove in the Result.

~~~~~ I mean not only as to their final Issue ; but even in relation to his present Concerns. Whereas sinful Lusts are uncertain, variable, and giddy ; as following no Rules, and being confined to no Bounds. Whoever has thrown himself into their Power ; must be ever in Danger, and often in Distress.—If these Grievances reached no further ; if Death put an End to the Sinner's Sufferings ; he might draw some little Comfort from such an Expectation. But however hard his Lot be here, it will be much harder hereafter. After a long and vexatious Persecution, he will find that his Sorrows are, in a Manner, only beginning. After Sin has dragged him through all the Evils of this Life ; instead of releasing him in the next, it *will bind him Hand and Foot, and throw him into utter Darknefs.*

Since then the Service of Sin is, on all Accounts, most grievous, and every way intolerable ; let us briefly inquire, before we conclude, whether Virtue and Religion make not fairer Offers. And here we find, at first sight, every Thing reversed. 'Tis universally seen and confessed, that

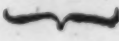
Virtue

Virtue is the truest Merit, and the noblest SERM.  
Distinction: that nothing in the World is, II.  
or can be, more amiable, or more glorious. }

And if we chuse to consider it in the Lights of Religion; it appears, at least, with equal Lustre. To say there is no Discredit, no Dishonour in the Practice of Religion, is to say Nothing. That we are capable of serving God, is the very Dignity and Pride of our Nature. To serve *Him*, is to serve the best and greatest of all Beings; the Origin of all Glory, and the Fountain of all Perfection: it is to serve Him who made us, and protected us, and poured an endless Variety of Blessings on us: it is to serve our ablest Friend, and kindest Benefactor; the Author of all Grace, the Giver of all Good, and the Ground of all our Hopes: in a Word, it is to serve Him who has every possible Claim and Title to our Service, and will have for ever.—Again; the Service of God is so far from Bondage and Slavery, that it is perfect Freedom. He is the gentlest and most gracious of all Masters; and his Laws are as light and easy, as could possibly consist with the Welfare of his Servants. They contain nothing grievous to the most ingenuous Minds; as never de-

SERM. parting from Nature and Reason, and al-

II. ways promoting the true Interest of Man-  
 kind. They debar us from nothing but  
 doing Harm, to ourselves, or Fellow-Crea-  
 tures ; and permit us to range any where  
 but in the Paths of Danger and Destruc-  
 tion. — Lastly, the Service of God is in-  
 finitely secure and beneficial. Excepting  
 Cases extraordinary, Religion is at all  
 Times our best and surest Protection. It  
 is so far from exposing us to Danger ; that  
 one of its chief Ends is to make and keep  
 us safe both here and hereafter. *He that*  
*walketh uprightly walketh surely*, whatever  
 Chances or Circumstances may befall him.  
 From the Evils of another Life he is ef-  
 fectually and compleatly guarded ; and ge-  
 nerally from the Evils of this. The wise  
 Rules he follows, deliver him from innu-  
 merable Misfortunes, and the Favour of  
 Heaven *defends him as it were with a Shield*.  
 — Nor does Religion more tend to the  
 Prevention of all Evil, than to the Pro-  
 duction of all Good. Great Peace and  
 Comfort it always yields in this World,  
 and oftentimes Prosperity. But in the  
 World to come it can never fail of pro-  
 ducing the noblest Fruits, and answering  
 every Expectation. There the faithful  
 Servants

Servants of God will most assuredly be SERM.  
crowned with exceeding Happiness, and II.  
eternal Glory: be enriched with Variety   
of Blessings, greater and mightier than  
Tongue can tell, or Heart conceive. —  
Upon the Whole, Since the Service of  
Sin is insupportable Bondage, and the Ser-  
vice of God perfect Liberty, and Life ever-  
lasting; whatever Choice we *may* make,  
most evident it is what we *ought* to make.  
And since by *committing Sin*, we surely  
and inevitably become the *Servants of Sin*;  
how tender ought we to be of our Inno-  
cence, and how tenacious of our Integri-  
ty? If we have failed herein, it concerns  
us above all Things to recover ourselves in  
Time, and rectify what we find amiss;  
*that being made free from Sin, and becoming*  
*Servants unto God, we may have our Fruit*  
*unto Holiness, and the End everlasting Life.*



THE HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON  
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT  
TO THE PRESENT TIME  
IN TWO VOLUMES  
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY  
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# S E R M O N III.

Connection between Duty and  
Happinefs.

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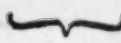
J O H N XIII. 17.

*If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye  
do them.*



H A T our blessed Saviour here SERM.  
III.  
observes to his Disciples con-  
cerning some particular Doc-  
trines and Duties, is justly ap-  
plicable to all Christians in respect of their  
whole Duty. Knowledge without Prac-  
tice will turn to small Account; but where  
they are joined, and go Hand in Hand,  
they cannot fail of producing happy Ef-  
fects in proportion to the Degree and Ex-  
tent of them. Yet alas! a great Part of  
Mankind, even among Christians, are ve-  
ry deficient and backward in both. Many  
refuse

SERM. refuse Knowledge, and chuse to live in Ig-

III.  norance; and many will not be persuaded to practise what they do know. Their Minds are so much employed, and their Thoughts taken up with the Concerns of the Body, that they have neither Leisure nor Inclination to take Care of the Soul. They have many Things to provide more agreeable than Knowledge; and, as they imagine, more useful and substantial. They are apt to suppose, that as much Knowledge as they have occasion for will naturally come in, as it were, by the bye; without Application, or loss of Time: and what Truth they do happen to meet with, is commonly soon thrown aside into some Corner of the Mind; where it lies neglected and disregarded like unprofitable Lumber.—But besides those Impediments to Knowledge arising from Indolence, or secular Cares, or sensual Avocations; others are frequently produced by Mens Prejudices and partial Ways of thinking. Even in very plain Cases, 'tis often a difficult matter to convince a Man of his Duty, or his Interest. Bring him the strongest Proofs, and set them in the clearest Light; yet they shall not be able to gain his Assent; and perhaps not move him at all.

Some

Some secret Inclination, some darling Ap-  
petite, shall bribe his Judgment, or spread  
a Mist over his Understanding. Hence

SERM.  
III.

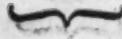
it is that Truth and Evidence lose their native Influence, and so often fail of Success. — But however hard it may be to convince Men of their Duty, 'tis much harder to prevail with them to practise it. The same corrupt Affections which bias their Understandings, shall take faster Hold of their Wills, and make them absolutely reject what they see and own is both reasonable and beneficial. Their Lusts and Passions have more Influence, and more Authority, than all the Motives that can be drawn either from Reason or Interest. Let *Wisdom* itself cry aloud, and *Understanding* put forth her Voice; yet Men will either not hear it, or not regard it. In numberless Cases they see plainly what is just, and right, and good; and yet obstinately refuse to submit to it. Conscious of great Blame, and desperate Folly, they persist in Evil-doing; and bear up, as well as they can, under all the Reproaches of their own Minds.

It is then, and ever has been, one of the greatest Difficulties in the World, to reconcile Mens Wills and Understandings,  
2 and



SERM. and prevail with them to *do* what they

III. *know* ought to be done. As it is most ab-

surd to imagine, that God should force those Creatures whom He has made free; so it is a plain Contradiction in itself, that Men should be driven into Virtue, and made good by Compulsion; since nothing can possibly be good or virtuous that is not the Result of free Choice. Without a Power of doing ill, they could have no Power of doing well; and indeed would be no Agents at all. Nothing more therefore could be done consistently with Man's Nature, than setting before him proper Motives and powerful Inducements. And what more proper, or more likely to succeed than that in my Text? There we learn that our Welfare and our *Happiness* depend on our Conduct and are inseparably connected with the Discharge of our *Duty*. And however regardless we may be of Reason and Truth, yet while we have any Sensibility, we must desire to be happy. This is a Principle which we can never quit, be we never so heedless or inconstant in our Pursuits. In short, if this Consideration will not work upon us, our Case is desperate, and we shall inevitably perish in our own Folly. Heaven and  
Earth

Earth can yield no Remedy to an obstinate, hardened, and incorrigible State of Mind. SERM.  
III.

But to proceed, Nothing can better deserve our Thoughts and Meditations than that Connexion between *Duty* and *Happiness* set forth in my Text. Both Reason and Revelation expressly inform us that Well-being is the Consequence of Well-doing; and that from the very Natures of Things, as well as divine Appointment. It has often been observed, and can never be too often considered, that Virtue is the very same Thing to the *Mind* that Health is to the *Body*; and by Consequence that every Vice is a real Distemper, and a preternatural Affection. — And how remarkable is the Resemblance and Coincidence of their Diseases! What is violent *Anger* and Rage, but a Fever of the Mind, attended with an Inflammation of the Blood and Spirits? What is *Envy*, but a Consumptive Passion, that preys on Mens Vitals, and emaciates both Mind and Body? What is *Intemperance*, but a slow Poison at best, and oftentimes *not* slow? What is *Discontent* and wandring Desire, but Sickliness of Appetite, which catches at every Thing, and relishes nothing? What  
are

SERM. are *Avarice* and *Ambition*, but Dropical

III. Habits of Mind ; which oppress it with a  
Load of Humours, and excite an unquenchable Thirst ? In fine, what is a sensual, *voluptuous Course of Life*, but a general Surfeit of the whole Man ; or a Complication of Distempers, that hurries him on swiftly to Death and Destruction ? — To exact Happiness, or propose any considerable Enjoyment, while the Mind is thus disordered, and its Constitution thus broken ; is just as reasonable, as it would be to form Schemes of Pleasure when a Man was weighed down with Infirmities and Diseases, and had one Foot in the Grave. In like manner, to pretend or promise ourselves such a State under the Bondage of Sin, and the Tyranny of evil Habits ; while the Appetites bear Sway, and the Passions domineer without Controul ; is no better than the Prospects of a Man in a Dungeon, or the Dreams of a Galley-Slave. Nay it is worse and more hopeless ; because no Confinement, no Slavery of the Body is equal to the Bondage of the Mind. No Irons, no Chains can press so closely, or gall so cruelly, as the Fetters of Sin ; which corrode

rode the very Substance of the Soul, and fret every Faculty. SERM.  
III.

The Foundation of all Happiness is a quiet, serene, and composed Mind; free from the Storms of Passion, and the Turbulence of unruly Desires: Where Reason sits at the Helm, and keeps the Instincts and Inclinations in due Subjection, and right Order. Whenever this is not the Case, in a good measure at least, true Satisfaction is an impossible Thing, and Happiness a mere *Chimæra*. And indeed since *there is no Peace to the Wicked*; since they are justly compared to *the troubled Sea when it cannot rest*; how should any real Happiness fall to their Share? How should a few broken Starts of Pleasure, poor transient Sensations, make Amends for those numberless Inquietudes, Vexations, and Distractions, which the unhappy Sinner is sure to undergo? Considering the endless Hurry of his Actions and Passions; the Tumults and Agitations of his Spirits; the Variety and Insatiableness of his Desires; the Terror of his Apprehensions, and the Torment of his Fears; considering, I say, these and the like Circumstances, who can imagine there is any



SERM. Chance for Happiness? As well might a

III. Man take Pleasure in a Tempest, or en-

joy himself in a Whirlwind, as find true Satisfaction amidst the Disorders of Sin, and the Confusions and Madneses of a wicked Life. — But with the virtuous Man the Case is far otherwise. He is sure to possess that Tranquillity of Mind which is the Spring of all Comfort, and at least the Root of all Felicity. Whatever Accidents may incommode him from without, he enjoys a perpetual Calm within: His Appetites are tractable, his Affections cool, and his Desires moderate: He reflects quietly, and acts sedately: His Contemplations are pleasing, his Hopes lively, and his Prospects delightful. In a Word, his Mind is at Ease, and his Heart at Rest; and he feels it to be true, that *the Fruits of Righteousness are Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness Quietness and Assurance for ever.*

But further, by doing well, and discharging his Duty, a Man not only avoids that Trouble and Vexation which is inseparable from a vicious Course of Life; but obtains real Pleasure and solid Enjoyment. As a Man may sin himself into such

such a Situation, that he dare scarce either SERM.  
look at himself, or think of himself; every III.  
Reflection giving him Pain, and every  
Recollection Shame and Remorse: So by  
good Deeds and virtuous Habits, he may  
improve his Mind to such a Degree, as to  
find Joy and Happiness springing up con-  
tinually within his own Breast, and be-  
come highly *satisfied for himself*. When-  
ever the virtuous Man looks inward, he has  
the Comfort to behold fair Ideas, and pure  
Affections; amiable Intentions, and worthy  
Actions. He has the Pleasure of perceiv-  
ing many Virtues of his own planting;  
many Graces of his own cherishing. His  
Conscience presents him with more agree-  
able Sights, and delightful Objects, than  
he can any where find without him  
through all the Works of Art and Nature.  
Truth, Probity, Integrity, Fidelity, Be-  
nevolence, Mercy, Charity towards Men;  
with humble Reverence, Gratitude, and  
Piety towards God; as they are in them-  
selves most lovely, and most excellent; so  
they must needs make a delightful Ap-  
pearance in the Eye of the Possessor. The  
noblest Views, and finest Prospects upon  
the Face of the Earth, cannot equal the

SERM. Charms of this Moral Landskip.—A cor-

III.  rupt and vicious Heart may be compared to a Wilderness over-run with Weeds, Thorns, and Briars, and full of Adders, Scorpions, and venomous Beasts; for every Sin sheds Poison, and every Vice carries a deadly Sting. But the Mind of a good Man is like *the Garden of Eden*, fair and flourishing, regular and beautiful; well cultivated, and richly covered; abounding in all the Sweets of Peace, and Freshness of Innocence, and the Fragrance of good Works: Where the Fruits of Righteousness are blooming on every Side, and Virtue, like *the Tree of Life*, bears Health, and Vigour, and Immortality.—In short, to live righteously, and persevere in Well-doing is gathering a Stock of the truest Enjoyments: 'Tis Pleasure in the Act, and Joy in the Remembrance: It affords at all times comfortable Thoughts, pleasing Reflections, delightful Hopes, and blessed Prospects.

But it is further to be considered, that as Innocence and Virtue many ways redound to Mens Satisfaction, and gratify the Mind with a great Variety of the purest Enjoyments; so they procure it, what nothing

thing else can, the Divine Esteem and Ap-  
probation. *Conscience* is God's Deputy and  
Vicegerent; and whatever Sentence it  
really passes, is ratified in Heaven. Who-  
ever therefore enjoys this *Testimony*, is se-  
cure of his Maker's Approbation. And  
what can be more agreeable to a wise  
Man, than to know and consider that his  
Conduct is approved by Infinite Wisdom?  
Men may deceive each other by Diffimu-  
lation and Flattery; may commend with  
their Lips what they condemn in their  
Hearts: And supposing them sincere, yet  
in many Cases they are very apt to mis-  
judge, and be mistaken. And these are  
confessedly great Drawbacks on Human  
Applause, and Diminutions of all earthly  
Fame. But our Supreme Judge can nei-  
ther deceive, nor be deceived: With Him,  
as there is no Possibility of Error; so there  
is no Partiality, nor Respect of Persons:  
Nor can he approve of any Thing but in  
proportion to its real Worth. Whatever  
therefore is valuable and acceptable in his  
Sight, is most infallibly good and amiable  
in itself. If then the *Praise of Men* ap-  
pears desirable, what must we think of  
the *Praise of God*? If true Glory be the

SERM.

III.



SERM. Object of our Ambition, here must we  
 III. seek for it; for here, and here only, is it  
 { to be found in Perfection. Not to mention at present the good Effects and blessed Consequences of God's Approbation, let us only consider it in itself; and we must necessarily conclude it to be the highest and most exalted Pitch of Honour that either Men or Angels are capable of enjoying. Now this noble, this sublime Privilege is one of the peculiar Appendages of Virtue. For as true Virtue can never fall short of it, so nothing else in the whole World can possibly procure it. No Wealth can purchase it, no Power extort it, no Knowledge give a Title to it. No Pretences or Professions, no Entreaties or Importunities can avail any thing towards it. Whatever we may know, whatever we may say, whatever we may do, besides our Duty; are all, in this respect, ineffectual, unprofitable, worthless. — Among the natural Advantages of Well-doing, I might also insist on those secular Comforts which Virtue often procures, and always promotes: I might proceed to shew how it influences all the Blessings of Life, and directly conduces to every Branch of worldly

ly

ly Prosperity. But these Subjects being SERM.  
too copious and extensive for our present III.  
Inquiry, must at this Time be omitted. }

I shall therefore go on to consider the *Second* Ground of that Happiness which is ascribed to the Practice of Virtue ; namely, the Will of Heaven, and the Appointments of Divine Wisdom. The Discharge of our Duty tends to our Happiness not only in a *natural*, but a *supernatural* Way. Great and manifold Blessings are annexed thereto by the Designations of Providence. And what Wonder that we find it so ordained ? What Wonder if the all-wise and all-righteous Governor of the World effectually maintain those Distinctions which are founded on eternal Truth, and essentially depend on the very Nature of Things. The Difference and Opposition between Light and Darkness, are not greater than those between Virtue and Vice. The one is intrinsically vile, base, and odious ; the other ever amiable, worthy, and good. Iniquity is, in itself, a proper Object of Displeasure and Resentment ; and Righteousness as proper an Object of Esteem and Favour. To punish therefore the one, and reward the

SERM. other, is only acting according to Truth  
 III. and Nature; and by Consequence what  
 { must ever be expected from the Rectitude  
 and Holiness of the Supreme Judge: Who  
 as *He is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity* without Marks of Indignation; so He  
 cannot fail finally to protect Innocence,  
 and give all due Encouragement to Virtue  
 and Goodness.

On this account then it is God's Will  
 and Pleasure, and his unchangeable De-  
 cree, that Misery shall be the Portion of  
 the Wicked, and Happiness of the Righ-  
 teous; if not here in this World, yet  
 hereafter most assuredly in the next. Even  
 in this World, tho' it be not the Place of  
 Retribution, Virtue is far from being  
 overlooked. On many Occasions, and in  
 several Respects, good Men enjoy the  
 present Favour and Countenance of Hea-  
 ven. A secret Blessing attends their Steps,  
 and guides their Feet into the Paths of  
 Success. And whenever, in outward Ap-  
 pearance, it proves otherwise, they are  
 only disappointed to their own Advantage.  
 For all Events are directed in their Fa-  
 vour, and *all Things work together for their*  
*Good.* In reality, *whatsoever the Righte-*  
 ous

*ous Man doth, it shall prosper.* That is, SERM.  
he shall either succeed in his own Way, III.  
or in a better; either accomplish his  
own Designs, or be conducted more sure-  
ly by the unerring Hand of Providence.  
— Whatever be his Share of outward  
Advantages, he is inwardly blessed in  
a peculiar manner. That Divine Peace  
which passeth all Understanding, is con-  
tinually shed abroad in his Heart. Those  
Spiritual Joys and Consolations which de-  
scend from above like the Dews of Hea-  
ven, are the Recruits of his Soul, and the  
Refreshments of his Spirit. The natural  
Delights of Virtue are heightened and im-  
proved by supernatural Comforts and Di-  
vine Benedictions.

But after all, tho' the Practice of Vir-  
tue be thus beneficial, and thus satisfac-  
tory, even in this Life; tho' it give some  
Degrees of Happiness in Hand; yet it  
promises and procures infinitely greater  
in Reversion. The Comforts and Bles-  
sings of good Men here below are quite  
inconsiderable, when compared with that  
mighty Good which is provided for them  
hereafter. At most, only small Tokens  
of God's Love, and Pledges of his Favour;  
to



SERM. to assure them of his Intentions, and give  
 III. them some little Sentiment of the Joys of  
 Immortality. Experience has shown us  
 how great a Difference there is between  
 the Toys and Amusements of Childhood,  
 and the manly Entertainments of a riper  
 Age. But the Disproportion is vastly  
 greater between the two States that we  
 are speaking of. As high as the Heavens  
 are above the Earth, so much do Things  
 temporal fall short of Things eternal.  
 We have no Words to express the Joys  
 and Glories of a blessed Immortality;  
 scarce any Ideas to think of them. The  
 Apostle, tho' admitted to a Glimpse there-  
 of, yet pronounces them beyond his Ut-  
 terance, and even above all human Con-  
 ception.

Nevertheless, this we know and are  
 assured concerning that State; it will be  
 intirely free from all Pain and Grief, from  
 all Tears and Sorrows; from every Sort  
 of Affliction, and every Shadow of Adver-  
 sity: There will be no Danger, no Possi-  
 bility of receiving Injuries either from  
 Men, or the Powers of Darknes: There  
 will be no Violence, Hatred, nor Hostility;  
 no Strife, Discord, or Disaffection: No  
 Fraud,

Fraud, Falsehood, Diffimulation, or SERM.  
Treachery: But on the contrary, Truth, III.  
Peace, Harmony, Joy, Benevolence, un-  
feigned Love and universal Charity will

prevail throughout, fill every Breast, and overflow the Regions of Bliss. There Virtue will appear in all its Charms, and operate every way with full Force: Shining outward in every Grace and Glory that either itself shall produce, or Heaven confer; and shedding inward perfect Complacency, and Transport unspeakable. The Society will consist of *Just Men made perfect*, and Angels more perfect; of the best and wisest of our Species, and the most excellent of theirs. At the Head of both will appear our Mediator and Redeemer, in full Triumph over all his Enemies and ours; possessed of all Power, Dominion, and Glory; rejoicing over the Purchase of his sufferings, the Fruits of his Goodness, and the Trophies of his Love. — How will the Faculties of the Righteous be then enlarged! And what an amazing Scene of Objects ready to employ them! What Depths of Knowledge! What Displays of Wisdom! What Manifestations of Truth and Equity! When the Works  
of

SERM. of the Creation, and the Wonders of the

III. Universe; the Difficulties of Providence,  
 and the Dispensations of Grace, shall be  
 laid open to their View, and set in the  
 clearest and strongest Light; and what  
 is infinitely more, when the blessed Deity  
 himself, the incomprehensible Majesty of  
 Heaven and Earth, shall be revealed to  
 Sight, as far as created Minds are capable  
 of such an Object, when He shall exhibit  
 his Light and Truth, and communicate the  
 Glories and Perfections of his Nature, with-  
 out Intermiſſion, without Measure, and  
 without End; then will it be known what  
 that Happiness is, which is the Fruit of  
 Righteousness, and the Reward of Well-  
 doing.

If then *we know these Things, happy are we if we do* what is necessary to obtain them. And what should we *not do*, what should we not undertake, in order to gain so vast a Good? If such an Interest, so inestimable a *Prize* as this, cannot influence our Minds, and excite our Affections, let us give up all Pretensions to Reason, and abandon ourselves to Sense and Appetite like the Creatures below us. How can we pretend to any Degree of  
 Wis-

Wisdom, or even common Understand-  
ing, if we undervalue the Treasures of  
Heaven, and the Joys and Glories of Im-  
mortality? Or if we prefer before them  
the low Pleasures, the little Delights, the  
momentary Enjoyments of Sin and Sense? SERM.  
III.

Can Vice yield any Good that is either  
durable or solid? Can it afford any thing  
comparable to the Effects and Rewards of  
Virtue? Are not the calm and steady  
Beams of the Sun more to be desired  
than short Flashes of Lightning? For thus  
may we compare the Satisfaction of In-  
nocence, and the Gratifications of Sin.  
The one are safe and serene, pure and per-  
petual; the other transient and broken,  
dangerous, and deadly.

A full *Knowledge* of our Duty is so far  
from being sufficient without *Practice*; so  
far from excusing the Want of it; that,  
in a great Measure, it is the very Thing  
which renders us inexcusable. Accord-  
ing to the equitable Rule of the Gospel,  
the better *we know our Lord's Will, and do*  
*it not*, the more *Stripes*, and the severer  
Punishment must we expect. *For unto*  
*whomsoever much is given, of him shall be*  
*much required.* And this, we are sensible,

is



SERM. is the Case of Christians in a peculiar Degree ; who, unless they wilfully shut their Eyes, are enlightened far beyond the rest of Mankind : And, by Consequence, their Obligations to Well-doing must be so much stronger in Proportion, and their future Happiness or Misery conformable thereto. This we should carefully and constantly keep in Mind ; not considering the Laws of Heaven as Subjects for Speculation, or Discourse ; but as practical Precepts, and the grand Rule of Life. Vain is that Religion which floats in the Head, and evaporates in Thoughts or Words. That only is real, which descends into the Heart, and moves the Springs of Action ; producing virtuous Deeds, and engaging Men in the Service of God and Goodness.

Upon the Whole, if we neglect to *know* the great Duties of Life, and the Obligations of Virtue and Religion, our Understandings are given us to no Purpose. And if *knowing* them we refuse to *practise* them ; how shall we answer it either to God, or ourselves ? Or *how* think to *escape* if we neglect so great Salvation ? What extreme Folly must it be to reject  
 4 such

such great Promises, and give up such glorious Prospects, for the sake of Dreams and Shadows! For certainly the best Fruits and Rewards of Sin ought to be reputed nothing better. *Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing* are before us; and on the Choice that we now make, depends our Condition, and Success for ever. Let us not then *trust in Vanity, lest Vanity be our Recompense*. Let us not trust to the flattering Insinuations of a vicious Course, lest Perdition be our Lot, and inevitable Misery our Doom. On the contrary, let us *follow the Things which make for our eternal Peace and Prosperity*. If we know and approve the Things that are excellent, let us *act* accordingly; cleaving to that which is good, habitually and stedfastly, to our Lives End.

SERM.  
III.





## S E R M O N IV.

Diversity of Opinion, no just Cause  
of Discord.

---

J O H N IV. Part of the 9th Verse.

*For the Jews have no Dealings with the  
Samaritans.*

**T**HE Disagreement between the  
Jews and the Samaritans, oc-  
casioned by different Sentiments  
of Religion, and different Places  
of Divine Worship, was raised to such a  
Height, as to break off, in a great mea-  
sure, all Intercourse between them, and  
put a Stop to the Offices of common Hu-  
manity. Excepting the Case of Com-  
merce, tolerated by Consent, they mu-  
tually avoided Correspondence, and treat-  
ed each other as Barbarians, or something  
worse.—Hence we find the *Woman of Sa-*



SERM. *maria* in no little Surprize, that our Savi-

IV. our being a *Jew*, should apply to her for  
 ~~~~~ *Water to drink.* Accordingly she expostu-  
 lates the Matter with him, and inquires
 how it came to pass. *How is it*, says she,
that thou being a Jew, askest Drink of me
who am a Woman of Samaria? Adding,
 in the Words of my Text; *for the Jews*
have no Dealings with the Samaritans. —
 In discoursing whereof, it is not my In-
 tention to enlarge on this particular Case;
 but rather to take an Occasion from hence
 of considering that general Propensity in
 Mankind which produced it, and which
 we find continually operating in the same
 Way, in all Times and Places, and even
 among Christians; though discountenanced
 and condemned by the first Principles,
 and clearest Precepts both of Reason and
 Revelation. The Propensity which I
 speak of, is that of Mens breaking loose
 from the Bonds of Humanity, and cherish-
 ing Discord and Disaffection, merely on Ac-
 count of Differences of Opinion, especially
 in Matters of Religion. In general, no-
 thing more frequent and familiar, than to
 observe what Animosities are daily kindled
 by the Opposition of Mens Sentiments
 and Speculations. But in respect of reli-
 gious

gious ones, the Effect is notorious, and SERM.
the Grievance almost universal. What- IV.
ever be the Meaning of it, we seem all to
expect that others should think as we do,
and subscribe to our Principles and Persua-
sions. And whenever this Expectation
fails, as fail it must perpetually; our Af-
fection is apt to cool, and our Good-will
to abate, in Proportion to the Difference.
Whoever judges in his own Way, and re-
jects ours; is, at least, looked upon with
a suspicious Eye, and forfeits some Share
of our Esteem. But very often he be-
comes an Object of our high Displeasure,
and is numbered among our worst Ene-
mies. Without any other Offence given,
than thinking differently from us, and
following the Conclusions of his own Un-
derstanding; he grows so very obnoxious,
that we oftentimes shun him, and refuse
to have any *Dealings* with him.—Instead
therefore of confining our Thoughts to
the particular Fact spoken of in my Text,
it may be proper to extend them to all
that are of the like Nature. Such an in-
human Way of Proceeding being general
and common, should be considered and
treated of accordingly. Since Men of all
Religions are more or less faulty in this

SERM. respect, as well as *Jews* and *Samaritans* ;

IV. instead of pointing our Censures at them,
 it behoves us all to take Part of the Blame ;
 to plead guilty ourselves, and provide, if
 possible, a suitable Remedy.—I shall there-
 fore endeavour in the

First Place, To give some Account of
 this strange Appearance.

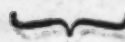
Secondly, To shew the Unreasonableness
 and Iniquity of such a Proceeding.
 And

Thirdly, To take Notice of the pernicious
 Consequences which flow from it.

First, I am to give some Account of
 this strange Appearance. For indeed,
 however common it be, it is a strange
 one ; as we must acknowledge, if we
 fairly consider it. We are offended at our
 Brethren ; think and speak ill of them ;
 and practise Hostilities against them. Why,
 what have they done ? They have, it
 seems, presumed to differ from us in O-
 pinion, and followed their own Judgments
 instead of ours. Does this Reason de-
 serve the Name of a Reason ? Is it not
 rather a most ridiculous Pretence ; and
 does it not appear such at first Sight ? But
 of

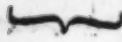
of this more afterwards. In the mean SERM.
time, let us briefly inquire into the true IV.
Cause of this Proceeding. For unless we
discover the Cause, it will be in vain to
think of a Cure.—On what Grounds then
can we fix it, or to what Principle ascribe
it? Is it owing to our *Love of Truth*, and
our Zeal and Concern for the Support of
it? Such a Principle, if sincere and ge-
nuine, would operate a quite contrary
Way. Admitting our Opinions to be as
just and true, as we suppose them to be;
how are they to be maintained, promoted,
and propagated? By Ill-will, or Good-
will; by Hatred, or Love; by Injuries
and Reproaches, or kind Usage, and gen-
tle Treatment? If we would recommend
our Opinions effectually, we must procure
them a fair Hearing: And in order there-
to, must appear well affected to those
whom we are endeavouring to convince.
If, on the contrary, we discover any Signs
of Enmity and Disaffection; will not Men
be naturally prejudiced against all the Ar-
guments that we can urge? Will they not
suspect, and that justly, that we are in-
fluenced by Motives very different from
what we pretend? In short, whoever has
a real Regard for Truth, and is desirous

SERM. to promote its Interests, must and will fol-

IV.  low Methods quite contrary to what we are speaking of. He will find it necessary to correspond with Men of different Persuasions fairly and friendly; and, in all his Dealings, to proceed with Humanity, Equity, and Candor. He will be so far from exasperating their Minds, by Malevolence, or Contempt; that he will strive to conciliate their Good-will, and cultivate their Esteem, by a willing Discharge of all such good Offices as may reasonably be expected from him. This Plea then is a mere Pretence; and can never be thought sufficient either to justify such a Practice, or account for it.—Can it then be any way referred to a pious Concern for the *Glory of God*? May we suppose that Men are impatient of Opposition, and zealous for their Opinions, from a strict Regard for the Doctrines of Religion, and in order to preserve them in their original Purity? However this may be alledged, it seems very difficult to find the Connexion. Let the pure Doctrines of Religion by all means be guarded and maintained as carefully as may be: But how is this to be done? Will Animosity go no further than Argument, or Reproaches have

have a better Effect than fair Reasoning. SERM.
If we judge that our Neighbour has erred IV.
and strayed from the Paths of Truth;
must we needs fall out with him, in order
to reduce him? Will our treating him
angrily or scornfully, make him more at-
tentive to Instruction or more open to
Conviction? Will he not rather be apt to
conclude that our Passions and Dispositions
are more faulty than his Faith, and more
irregular than his Judgment? As *the*
Wrath of Man worketh not the Righte-
ousness of God, so it is the most improper
Instrument in the World for the Main-
tenance of his *Truth*. So far is it from
being conducive to the Support and Pro-
tection of sound Doctrine, that it is much
more likely to shake and subvert it. And
supposing it otherwise, 'tis at best a very
hard Supposition, that God should ever be
glorified by such Measures as are repug-
nant to Charity and Humanity, and con-
trary to the Principles both of Nature
and Religion. But indeed such a Con-
duct answers neither Purpose; as being
no less injurious to Truth, than it is to
Peace and Good-will.—And as to the Ad-
vancement of *Publick Good*, there can be
no Room at all for such a Pretence. So

SERM. far from it, that the very Reverse must na-

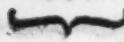
IV.  turally follow; as I shall have Occasion to observe under another Head. To promote and propagate what we believe to be Truth by amicable Methods is undoubtedly a real Service to the Publick; but Strife, and Variance, and uncharitable Proceedings are the very Bane of human Society. — Since then the Behaviour we are speaking of is not to be accounted for by the fore-mentioned Suppositions, where shall we search for the true Source of it? To what Cause, or what Principle, may it justly be ascribed? To none, I fear, that is Praise-worthy, or even innocent: Nay to none but what is highly blameable, and what we are, or ought to be, greatly ashamed of. For the plain Truth is, that it springs from *Pride, Vanity*, and immoderate *Self-Love*: Nothing else is sufficient to account for it, or capable of producing it. Being swelled with a high Conceit of our own Opinions, because they are our own; our Attachment to them becomes so strong, that every Opposition is apt to give us Pain, and become an Object of our Displeasure. We look upon it as an Offence, and an Injury; and too often resent it accordingly. Hence, in a great mea-

measure, proceed those rigorous Judg-
ments, and rugged Dealings, which have
so often appeared even among Christians;
to the Dishonour of our holy Religion,
and indeed the Reproach of human Nature.
An intemperate Fondness for our own
Notions, set off and sanctified by specious
Names, has not only laid waste our Cha-
rity, but often made us violate the first
Principles of Humanity and common
Justice. This will further appear, if we
go on to consider in the

SERM.
IV.
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Second Place, The Unreasonableness and Iniquity of such a Proceeding. By the Law of Nature, by all the Rules of Reason and Religion, every Man has a right to our Good-will; of which Right nothing can ever deprive him, whatever his Character or Conduct may be. And not only to our Good-will is he intitled, but even to our Esteem; till he forfeit it by Misbehaviour and Demerit. If we entertain a hard Thought, an unfavourable Opinion of any Man, without Grounds; we are manifestly unjust and injurious. Let it then be considered whether any Disagreements or Differences of Opinion be a just Ground for Dislike, a real Forfeiture of our Esteem. Now this is so far from
being

SERM. being true, that it is utterly impossible.

IV.  And the Reason is, because no Man's Opinions or Persuasions are in his own Power, or subject to his Will. He must believe as he can; and is under a Necessity of judging, if he judge at all, according as the Evidence of Things appears to him. He may indeed misapply and pervert his Faculties; so may we: But in either Case this is impossible to be known, excepting by God and a Man's own Conscience. Supposing then, what ought always to be supposed in such a Case, that other Men use their Faculties, and exercise their Judgments, as fairly and uprightly as we do; they may still differ from us, and perhaps widely: I ask, what is the Offence, or where shall we fix the Blame? Shall we accuse Men of Faults not voluntary; or lay to their Charge Things unavoidable? Are Men to answer for those Operations of the Mind wherein they are intirely passive; and which they can no more alter, than they can change the very Frame of their Nature? If they have carefully sought the Truth, and sincerely followed the best Light they could get, they are innocent in the Sight of God, and even secure of his Acceptance, what-

whatever Errors they may have fallen in- SERM.
to. But *Men*, it seems, are not so easily IV.

Satisfied. So hard and unreasonable we are; that we take Offence, where none is either given or meant. If our Neighbour's Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, and his Principles conformable to ours; he incurs our ill Opinion, our Indignation, our Censures: We condemn him oftentimes without Mercy, and would punish him if we could. Has he done us any Wrong, or committed any Fault at all? Not any; and in Truth we might as well, and with as good Reason, quarrel with him for the Difference of his Looks, and Features, as the Difference of his Opinions. Both are alike involuntary, and intirely out of his Power and Choice.— But further; let us suppose that it was in his Power to come into our Way of thinking; why should he not use his own Liberty as well as we? He differs no more from us, than we do from him: And, by Consequence, if there be any Fault committed, any Offence made; it is mutual, and belongs to both alike. He has as good a Right to direct and dictate to us, as we to him; or if our Pretensions reach any further, we shall make out our Claim.

SERM. Claim. Do we pretend to set up our Sen-

IV. timents as a common Standard? Or would

we, in Resemblance of a noted Tyrant, reduce all Mens Understandings to the Model and Measure of our own? If we presume, and take it for granted, that we are in the Right, and others in the Wrong; what hinders them from making the same Supposition in Favour of themselves? And whether it be made by one, or the other; Assurance and Confidence are by no means certain Marks of Truth.—But let it be supposed that Truth actually is on our Side; what follows? Only this; that till other Men are convinced of it, we cannot expect their Concurrence. And in order to convince them, let any Man judge whether cool Arguments, and candid Instructions, be not much more likely Means, than either bitter Reproaches, or contemptuous Neglect.—But does not the Scripture seem to countenance severe and rigorous Proceedings, in respect of those who corrupt the Doctrines of Religion? Are we not required to *mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Apostolick Doctrine?* And if any come and bring not such Doctrine; are we not expressly forbid to *receive them*, or even shew

shew them common Civilities? I answer, SERM.
that if the Persons here spoken of had IV.
been only chargeable with erroneous O-
pinions, and false Doctrines; and their
Characters clear in other Respects; these
Directions about them would not easily
have been accounted for. But the Truth
is, as the best Interpreters allow, that their
Practice was as corrupt as their Faith
could be; and their Conduct not only
immoral, but infamous and profligate.
The Apostle expressly mentions their *evil*
Deeds; and there is good Reason to be-
lieve that their Misbehaviour was notori-
ous. What wonder then if he warned
the Faithful against such licentious Men,
and would have them generally *marked*
and discountenanced? But can any In-
stance be produced, where Persons of a
good moral Character are either treated by
our Saviour or his Apostles, or ordered to
be treated by others, with Rigour and Se-
verity, merely on Account of their Errors,
whether small or great? If no such In-
stance is to be found, as may securely be
affirmed, vain are all Endeavours to seek
Patronage in the Gospel for such Proceed-
ings as are directly contrary to the true
Spirit and Design of it, as well as the Te-
nor

SERM. nor of its Precepts. However the Main-

IV. tainers of immoral Doctrines and wicked

 Principles may be there branded; yet great Lenity and Indulgence are ever shewn to mere Errors of Judgment, and the Mistakes of well-meaning Men. In short, the Disposition we are considering is inhuman and unjust; and therefore is, and must be, equally condemned by Reason and Revelation. Nothing indeed is more opposite to the true Genius of Christianity, or the Example and Practice of its great Author; whose Gentleness and Meekness were never to be exhausted by the most injurious Actions; much less by involuntary Failings, and invincible Mistakes. Whenever we find his Zeal exerted in sharp Admonitions, and warm Reproofs; we are sure there is real Guilt and that of the worst Sort. But Opinions and Judgments simply erroneous never offended him; and we may safely say, never will. The

Third Particular which I proposed, Is briefly to take notice of the pernicious Consequences of the Practice here complained of; which in the first Place, may be considered as producing *publick* Evils of the highest Malignity. To this has
been

been owing a great Share of those Calamities and Miseries which have so cruelly and constantly infested the Christian World. From this Fountain have flowed not only bitter Waters, but Streams of Blood in every Age: Inquisitions, Persecutions, Martyrdoms, Murders, Massacres, are in a great Measure to be placed to the Account of this intolerating, unchristian Spirit. A considerable Part of the best and worthiest of Mankind have fallen Victims to this barbarous Principle; and most of our Histories are blackened with the horrid Cruelties occasioned by it.— Even where it has operated in a milder and more moderate Way, it has produced much Mischief, and a great Variety of Troubles and Inconveniences. The chief Blessings of Society it has corrupted and poisoned; robbed Men of their mutual Affection, Benevolence, and Esteem; infused Jealousies, kindled Contentions, and spread Varience and Discord far and wide: It has divided Friends, Families, Kindred; crumbled Communities into Parties and Factions; and burst asunder the strongest Bonds and Obligations both natural, civil, and religious: In short, it
has

SERM.
IV.

SERM. has disturbed and damaged the Publick in
 IV. numberless Respects, and frequently introduced general Disorder and Confusion.—
 Again; if we consider its *private* Effects, and how it operates on the Minds of those who harbour it; we shall find it no less mischievous and fatal within, than it is without. It perverts their Understandings, corrupts their Judgments, and alienates their Affections; it confounds their Ideas of Merit and Demerit, and makes them estimate Characters by false Rules, and fallacious Measures; it creates uneasy and vexatious Sentiments, and sheds into their Breasts the corroding Venom of Ill-will; it supplants Mens Graces and good Dispositions, and plants evil Habits in their Room; it feeds that Vanity from which it springs, and nourishes Presumption, Confidence, and Self-Conceit; in a Word, it kills the kind Instincts of Humanity and Compassion, and sometimes pulls them up by the very Roots. And what Enjoyment, what Peace or Tranquility of Mind is to be expected, where so malignant a Principle has taken Hold, and fixed itself to any Depth? A Principle so unnatural and
 perverse;

perverse; so injurious to Virtue, and by SERM.
Consequence destructive of Happiness; IV.

that it may justly be looked upon as a great Curse, to its Possessors, as well as to the Publick. —Lastly, a further Evil attending it, is the Discredit and Dishonour which it does to Religion; against which many Men are easily prejudiced; and perhaps no way more, or sooner, than this. Christianity, in particular, ever suffers, and that greatly, through this very Misconduct. Candor and Charity are the chief Characteristick of Christians; their peculiar Ornament, and noblest Distinction. And whenever it is sacrificed to mere Opinions, and Points of Speculation; the Blame is apt to be misapplied and transferred, and the Profession itself charged with the Faults and Follies of its Professors. The Gospel grants all due Freedom, and every innocent Liberty; and not only so, but requires Men to *stand fast* therein. On the contrary many Christians provide Chains and Fetters, and oblige Men to put them on. Let the Adversaries of our Religion consider how they direct their Accusation, and fix their Charge: Most evident it is how they ought

SERM. to fix it. Private Judgment is not only
 IV. our Privilege, but our Duty; not only
 permitted, but enjoined by Christ and his
 Apostles. What Dishonour then, what
 Indignity do Christians offer to their sacred Institution; when, instead of encouraging private Judgment, they pluck it out of Mens Hands, and place implicit Faith in its Room! When instead of leaving them at liberty to interpret Scripture, and judge for themselves; they tie them down to the Doctrines and Explications of frail and fallible Guides!

Upon the Whole; if we have any Regard to plain Reason, and natural Equity; if we wish Peace and Prosperity either to our Fellow-Creatures, or ourselves; if we have any Concern for the Glory of God, and the Honour of his Dispensations; let us not presume *to exercise Dominion over other Mens Faith*, or take any Steps towards oppressing their Understandings, or impairing their Liberties. Let us grudge no Man the Possession of those Rights which Nature has given him, and the Gospel has confirmed to him; ever remembering that divine Rule of *dealing with others, as we would be dealt with ourselves.*

In order hereto, let us carefully guard a-SERM.
gainst all Excesses and Irregularities of IV.
Self-Love; resist the Impulses of Vanity;
and check betimes the Desires of Domi-
nation. Let the Love of Equity and Pro-
bity prevail in our Minds; and let us
maintain and cherish Sobriety of Thought,
and Humility of Spirit. *Above all let us*
put on Charity, which is the Bond of Per-
fectness, the End of the Commandment, and
the very Effence of the Gospel.



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S E R M O N V.

HAMAN *and* MORDECAI.

ESTHER V. 13.

*Yet all this availeth me nothing, so
long as I see Mordecai the Jew
sitting at the King's Gate.*

IN these Words complained SERM.
V.
Haman, the Favourite of *Ahasuerus* the King of *Persia*. This powerful Prince had raised him up from a mean Estate to the highest Rank and Dignity; conferred on him peculiar Honours, and distinguished him from all the Nobles and Princes of his Court. In this exalted Condition he was revered by all, excepting *Mordecai the Jew*; who resolutely declined the expected Homage.

SERM. To inquire after the Cause of this singular Disrespect, would be loss of Time; as being a Point of mere Curiosity, and no Consequence. Whatever *Mordecai's* Reasons might be, we find *Haman* highly incensed at him. The Indignity appeared so great, and the Affront so heinous, that he was not content to mark out the Offender alone as an Object of Vengeance. This he judged not sufficient Satisfaction; and therefore meditated a more ample Revenge, by destroying all the *Jews* in the Kingdom. This Resolution, unjust and cruel as it was, was brought very near the Point of Execution; and would, in all Probability have been accomplished, had not Providence remarkably interposed, and turned the intended Ruin on his own Head.

From hence we might take a proper Occasion of considering the miserable Influences of Pride and Ambition; which intoxicate Mens Mind with high Conceits, make them insolent and outrageous, and willing to burst all the Bonds of Humanity, on the slightest and most trivial Occasions. They lose all Patience, when any thing stands in their Way, or tends to reduce those swelling Ideas which they form
of

of themselves.—From hence likewise we SERM.
V.
might observe the pernicious Effects of
ungoverned Rage; which, being once
kindled, often mounts into a mighty
Flame, and spreads Destruction far and
wide.—We might also take notice, from
the Event of this History, of the Justice
and Wisdom of divine Providence; which
confounds the Devices of the Crafty, and
condemns them to fall into those very
Snares which they lay for others. Tho'
this Life be not properly a State of Re-
tribution; yet it affords many Instances of
Vengeance providentially executed on those
who give themselves up to unrighteous
Measures and inhuman Practices.—These
and the like Reflections might be drawn
from the Incidents of this historical Pas-
sage. But I shall confine myself at pre-
sent to the two following Observations,
which more immediately arise from the
Declaration in my Text.

First then I observe, That however kind
Providence may have been to us; it fre-
quently happens that one single Misfor-
tune, and that too a gentle one, is suffi-
cient to blast all our Blessings; to make us
insensible of God's Goodness, and regard-

SERM. less of his Benefits. We may read in the

V. Verses foregoing my Text what great Honours and Advantages *Haman* was possessed of. *The Glory of his Riches; the Multitude of his Children; his Promotion and Advancement above the rest of the Princes; in short, every Distinction, every Instance of Favour, that he could wish, or the King confer. Yet, it seems, all this Prosperity availed him nothing, while he had the Mortification of being slighted by Mordecai the Jew.*—We may wonder perhaps at such a Turn and Temper of Mind, and even reflect on it with Indignation and Astonishment; never suspecting that we ourselves are ever chargeable with the like Folly and Extravagance. But if we examined our own Hearts, we should sometimes discover too near a Resemblance. Though we may not possess such an Affluence, nor enjoy such Dignities and Distinctions; we may nevertheless be really prosperous in a lower Sphere. We may share largely the Favours of Providence, and boast a great Variety of Blessings: In which Condition it often happens, that one cross Accident gives us more Disquiet and Discontent, than all our Enjoyments can yield

Satisf-

Satisfaction. These are all overlooked for SERM.
a Time, and our Thoughts wholly em- V.
ployed in ruminating on the other. On
such Occasions we indulge a foolish Vex-
ation, and are apt to think with *Jonah*,
that *we do well to be angry*. But

Secondly, Not *real* Misfortunes only produce such Effects; even *imaginary* ones are frequently sufficient for that Purpose. Had *Haman* incurred some grievous Disaster, some dire Calamity; we should less have wondered, and more easily have accounted for the Disturbance it gave him. But surely this was not his Case. If his was really a Misfortune, it was a Misfortune of his own making. For what Evil had befallen him, excepting the Smart of his own Folly? His Mind was was galled by a secret Wish, which he knew not how to accomplish; and if he had, no good Consequence of any Kind was to be expected; but in all Probability much Damage and Disadvantage. What he so earnestly and passionately wished, was only the Gratification of a proud insolent Humour: And yet it seems, without this, he could neither enjoy himself, nor any thing that belonged to him. All his good Fortune

SERM. tune was vanished out of his Sight, and

V. Wealth, Honour, Grandeur, availed him

nothing.—Such a Disposition, and such a Conduct, however strange they may seem, are not uncommon among Men. When we are in Adversity, we are generally restless, impatient, full of Anxieties and Complaints; and when we rise above it, and our Circumstances are improved, 'tis oftentimes done to very little Purpose. Whatever our Condition be, something or other is commonly wanting to satisfy our Minds, and set them at Rest. When we are pressed with Indigence and Hardship, we are apt to think if we could but emerge, and once lift our Heads above Distress, we should not only be contented, but thankful. If Providence would be pleased to grant us what we call Necessaries, we should chearfully sit down, and disquiet ourselves no further. Well; our Point is gained, and more than gained; what follows? Does it produce the Effect we proposed and promised? Is our Contentment, Gratitude, Complacency, visible to all about us? Alas! this is seldom the Case. As our Conditions change, we change: When our old Wishes and Desires are answered,

new

new ones start up ; which discompose us SERM.
V.
full as much as the former, and engage us
in the same Toils and troublesome Pursuits.

Though the Grievances we complained of are effectually removed, yet we soon make a Shift to find out a fresh Set. Either something remains which we earnestly covet, and know not how to obtain ; or some petty Misfortune happens which we cannot well bear : For a small Matter will serve to disquiet us in the Day of Prosperity. Those lesser Difficulties which appeared before scarce worthy of our Notice, are now magnified into great Hardships ; and almost any thing affords a Handle for Complaint.—In short, as we contrive Matters, there is often very little Difference between *Prosperity* and *Adversity*. In Adversity we suffer those Hardships which it pleases God's Providence to lay upon us ; and in Prosperity we suffer those which we are pleased to lay upon ourselves : And as the latter are more numerous, so they are often more pungent than the former. And indeed those Evils which are not real, but fantastical, seem to be invented by us on purpose to make ourselves more miserable than we need to be,

SERM. be. We set our Hearts on many Things,

V. and are passionately fond of them, though
they gratify no one natural Desire, but
intirely owe their Value to our Imagina-
tions : And the Want of these is frequent-
ly our capital Grievance ; creating us more
Trouble, and Torment, and Vexation, than
we ever endure from the most substantial
Calamities.—In a low State of Life, our
Wants being natural, our Wishes are com-
monly the same ; and we have then nei-
ther Leisure nor Inclination to gratify our
Humours, and indulge our Fancies. But
when our natural Desires are once pro-
vided for, our Minds generally take a new
Turn ; looking out for other Objects, and
fresher Entertainment. These we pursue
with such Eagerness and Impatience, that
the want of Success becomes insupportable.
Every Disappointment gives great Pain, and
pierces to the Quick. The many real Blef-
sings and solid Advantages which we pos-
sess, are all disregarded. Our great Con-
cern is, that some particular Humour re-
mains ungratified : On which Account we
ridiculously give ourselves up to an unna-
tural Grief, and refuse to be comforted.—
Such Reflections as these plainly offer them-
selves

selves on a View of *Haman's* Case, as re-
presented by himself in the Words of my
Text. Let us therefore go on to consider
the Impiety and Folly of such a Conduct.

First, The Impiety of it; as it evidently implies great Ingratitude towards God, and an impious Opposition to his Will. When God has been graciously pleased to fix a Man in a fair and flourishing Condition; to confer on him innumerable Favours, and bless him almost to the Height of his Wishes; ought not such Obligations to excite a strong Sense of Gratitude? Or if that be too much, ought they not at least to banish all Discontent? And make him bear chearfully those Troubles and Crosses which are incident to every State of human Life? If a real Misfortune befall him, is he not bound, doubly bound, to endure and submit? To repine at such a Dispensation in his Circumstances, and murmur in the midst of so many Blessings, cannot but appear highly unreasonable and ungrateful, Perhaps God saw fit to chasten him this once, that he might humble him, and prove him. Perhaps such a Chastisement was necessary; and though for the present not joyous but grievous, yet it might turn at length

SERM.
V.
}

SERM. length to a most desirable Account, and

V. deserve to be numbered among his chief

—Blessings.—However, to set this Consideration aside, and not to mention his Sins and Provocations, which give him at all Times just Cause to apprehend severer Treatment; I would only ask, whether one single Stroke of Adversity be sufficient to cancel all his Obligations, and blot out every Mercy that he has received? In how unjust, how unequal a Balance, does that Man weigh the Dispensations of Heaven, who suffers one Misfortune, or more than one to turn the Scale against Ten Thousand Blessings!

But to proceed, if it argue so much Ingratitude in any Man, to repine and struggle in a prosperous Condition, when a *real* Calamity befalls him; what shall we say or think of him, who sinks under an *imaginary* Grievance, and provokes Heaven every Hour with idle Complaints, and groundless Lamentations? For this indeed is the Case before us, as I have already taken notice. And what can be said to excuse, or even extenuate such extreme Perverseness? Because some little Event happens cross to our Inclinations, is this
enough

enough to corrupt our Enjoyments, and SERM.
 extinguish all Sense of the divine Bounty? V.
 Because we cannot have our Wills and
 our Humours in every thing, must we
 therefore like froward Children, take pett
 at God's Providence, and grow sad and
 sullen we know not why? Instead of
 Gladness, behold Uneasiness! Instead of
 Praises and Acknowledgments, Murmurs
 and Complaints! — Whence comes it to
 pass, that the great, the powerful *Haman*
 droops and languishes all on a sudden?
 What occasions his deep Discontent, and
 makes him sit down in Sorrow and Sad-
 ness? Why, a certain *Jew* has affronted
 him, and he wants to be revenged; and
 if God will not give him an Opportunity,
 he may revoke his Gifts, and withdraw his
 Blessings. And accordingly he did so:
 Not only his Riches and his Honours, but
 his Life too. The same ignominious In-
 strument which he had contrived for the
 Death of *Mordecai*, is appointed by Pro-
 vidence for his own; and his Shame and
 Punishment rendered as conspicuous as his
 former Honour and Prosperity.—This may
 teach us beyond any Arguments, the Ini-
 quity and Guilt of such a Temper, and
 such

SERM. such a Conduct. God is ever good and
V. gracious to the Children of Men ; ever
ready to promote their Welfare : But *he*
has no Pleasure in Fools. He will not prosper ungrateful Men against their Wills ; nor make those happy, who take great Pains to make themselves miserable. *His Spirit will not always strive* with our crooked Humours, and capricious Inclinations. If his Gifts are lost upon us, and his Favours turn to no Account ; what Wonder if he resume them ? Can we expect or imagine, that he should gratify all our Desires, whether reasonable or unreasonable, wise or foolish ? Is it not a great Indignity to the Divine Majesty, to suppose that he should concur in all our idle Purposes and vain Projects ? Surely it is enough, if he grant us what is really fitting for us ; if he give us a liberal Share of his Blessings, and thereby place Happiness in our Power, and within our Reach, If this will not satisfy our Minds, and make us easy, we are notoriously guilty of the most horrid Ingratitude ; and without Question grievously offend God, who has been so bountiful to us in vain. The

Second

Second Point to be considered is the SERM.
 Folly of such a Temper, and such a Con- V.
 duct. And here I might observe, that the
 very Charge last mentioned includes this.
 That Practice, by which we incur the In-
 dignation of Heaven, must be in the high-
 est Degree foolish, because fatal; as de-
 priving us of the Blessings we enjoy, and
 exposing us to severe Judgments. But
 this is not all. For it makes Men mise-
 rable, whether God execute Vengeance or
 not; and indeed is itself a most grievous
 Punishment. As it is a joyful and *plea-*
sant Thing to be thankful; so to be un-
 thankful and querulous, is Vexation itself.
 Whatever State a Man is in, common
 Prudence obliges him to maintain, as well
 as he can, the Tranquillity of his own
 Mind. Impatience never does Good. On
 the contrary, it doubles every Misfortune,
 and turns even the gentlest Grievs into
 Adversity and Wretchedness. On which
 Account all wise Men avoid it as much as
 possible in Trouble and Distress. And if
 they guard against it in Distress, surely
 they can never give Way to it in Prospe-
 rity. Nevertheless we find great Num-
 bers uneasy and unhappy in the most flou-
 rishing

SERM. rishing Condition. Too many, to all Ap-
 V. pearance, seek out for Causes and Occa-
 sions of Discontent. They seem, as it were,
 industrious in the Pursuit of artificial Grievs;
 and when they have reached them, are no
 longer able to enjoy themselves; but com-
 plain, in the very Wantonness of Lamen-
 tation, of their unfortunate State, and hard
 Lot. Shall we call this Folly, or some-
 thing worse? How is it possible for ratio-
 nal Creatures to behave in so very wild, so
 absurd a manner? When the Comforts of
 Life are put into our Hands; shall we
 throw them away, and take up Crosses
 instead of them? Can we find in our
 Hearts, in spite of Nature and common
 Sense, to become Volunteers in Trouble
 and Misery! Most certainly it is not in
 our Power to despise or undervalue Hap-
 piness. Nay, we must unavoidably and
 necessarily desire it at all Times. Yet we
 often seek it as if we did not desire it: That
 is, we frequently fail and fall short, when
 we might succeed if we pleased. Refusing
 to follow the Order of Nature, we would
 either be happy our own Way, or not at
 all. Hence it is that we so eagerly follow
 our own Inventions, and then are angry
 when

when they mislead us.—Is it then for this SERM.
 only that the Bustle of the World is car- V.
 ried on? Do we build so many Schemes
 of Happiness, merely for the childish Plea-
 sures of pulling them down? *What Profit*
shall we thus have of all the Labour that we
take under the Sun? In short, As the Choice
 and Pursuit of proper Means to make our-
 selves happy, is true Wisdom; so the Use
 of such Means as plainly tend to make us
 miserable, is the very Essence of Folly.

From what has been said we may plain-
 ly perceive, that no Man's Happiness de-
 pends chiefly on his outward Condition.
 Let any Man be surrounded with the Ad-
 vantages of Life: Let him have Health,
 Wealth, and Honour, to the Extent of his
 Wishes: Yet if his Mind be out of Order;
 he shall still be discontented, still miserable.
 If outward Blessings could have procured
 Happiness, surely *Haman* had never want-
 ed it. For what worldly Good did he not
 possess; and that in great Abundance? But
 his Mind was not answerable to the Pro-
 sperity of his Condition, and therefore *it*
availed him Nothing. The Truth is, when
 a Man's own Heart pronounces a Curse
 upon him, Providence blesses him in vain.

SERM. Many Things without us may contribute to

V. our Well-being, if we will give them

Leave ; but they will not, they cannot make us happy against our Wills. *Man's Life consisteth not*, as our Saviour informs us, *in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth*. That is, the true Comfort and Enjoyment of Life is not principally owing to external Goods ; and therefore must be fought for elsewhere.

It highly concerns us then to take great Care of the Frame and Disposition of our Minds ; for this is the true Ground of Happiness, and no other solid Foundation can any Man lay. When we employ our Hands in the Provision of worldly Goods, and at the same time neglect our Hearts, we take a certain Method to lose our Labour. However we may succeed as to the Means, we shall surely be disappointed of our End. Should we prosper and flourish beyond all our Hopes ; should we raise our Condition as high as *Haman's* ; yet if we guide and govern as weakly as he did, there is just Cause to fear we may perish as wretchedly.—On the other Hand, if our Minds are rightly disposed ; we are then proper Objects of the divine Bounty. The
Blessings

Blessings which God sends will then be SERM.
truly such, and we shall reap that Satisfac- V.
tion from them which he intends we
should. If he pour into our Hands Abun-
dance, it will not be lost on us; and a
much lesser Portion will content us, and
even make us happy. Whatever we pos-
sess, we shall make the utmost of it, in the
true Sense of the Word. The Sweets of
Prosperity we shall then taste unmixed;
at least we shall mingle no bitter Ingre-
dient ourselves. In short, a distempered
Mind, like a vitiated Stomach, is apt to
corrupt all it receives; but Wisdom and
Virtue give a just Relish of God's Gifts,
and season every Enjoyment.—When it
was offered to King *Solomon's* Choice what
Blessing he would receive; we find him
rejecting all outward Goods, and pitching
on *Wisdom*: A plain Indication that he was
no Stranger to the Gift before he asked it.
For indeed *a wise and understanding Heart*
comprehends almost every thing. It di-
rects a Man to all that is truly good, and
qualifies him to enjoy it to the best Ad-
vantage. Without this, the most prosper-
ous Condition is uncomfortable; and with
it, even Adversity tolerable. The wise Man

SERM. equally understands how to bear a low Station, or become a high one : Knows *how* *to want, and how to abound* ; and whatever State he is in, to promote God's Glory, and his own true Good.

Let us therefore labour for Wisdom, which will guide our Feet in every Path of Life ; which will support and direct us in all States, and every Situation. And since, whenever we obtain it, it must come from above ; let us in Imitation of the Royal Pattern beforementioned, ask it of God ; *who giveth to all Men liberally and upbraideth not* : Humbly beseeching him, that amidst his manifold Gifts he will not leave us destitute of his Grace, to use them alway to his Honour and Glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



S E R M O N VI.

Reason and Religion.

1st Epist. CORINTH. XIVth Chap.
Part of the 20th Verse.

But in Understanding be Men.



ABSTRACTING from the SERM.
particular Occasion of these VI.
Words, they set before us a
general Precept of great Use
and Importance for the Conduct and Re-
gulation of our religious Concerns. They
might indeed be extended to all others;
but since the Apostolick Epistles were writ-
ten intirely with a View to these, and our
Province reaches no further, I shall restrain
the Consideration of my Text to the Doc-
trines and Duties of Religion.—We find

SERM. VI. in the Gospel particular Notice taken of
 young Children, whose Innocence and Simplicity recommended them to the peculiar Regard of our Lord himself; insomuch that *he took them up in his Arms and blessed them*; proposing their Disposition, their Freedom from Guile, Fraud, and Hypocrisy, to all his Disciples; and expressly affirming, that *Whoever should not receive the Kingdom of Heaven as a little Child, he should not enter therein*. Which Declaration may either be understood of his Kingdom of Grace, or his Kingdom of Glory. Conformable hereto we find the Apostle's Doctrine in the Words immediately preceding my Text, *In Malice be ye Children*: That is, inoffensive and harmless as Children. But then to prevent Misconstruction and Misconception, he premises, *Brethren be not Children in Understanding*; subjoining in the Words of my Text, *but in Understanding be Men*. A plain Proof that the Apostle considered the Religion of Christ as a *reasonable Service*; whatever Rules it laid down, and whatever Obedience it required. For otherwise a *manly Understanding* would turn to no Account, and the Cultivation of its Powers be quite useless
 in

in Mens religious Concerns. Tho' our Saviour always enjoined Docility and Modesty, Probity and Candor; yet *rational* Disciples never were, never could be unacceptable to him: On the contrary, he required them to *judge for themselves*, and encouraged the Use of all proper Means of Satisfaction and Conviction. But this will more distinctly appear by considering the two following Particulars.

First, The Propriety of the Apostle's Exhortation. And

Secondly, Its great Use and Importance.

First, It may be considered as *proper* in itself, universally; and in some respects as peculiarly proper to the first Christians, in the Infancy of the Gospel. — As God has made Mankind intelligent Creatures, and blessed them with Reason and Understanding, undoubtedly he expects and requires that they make a suitable Use of so divine a Gift. This must be incumbent on them at all Times, and upon all Occasions. Herein indeed we know they failed in Fact; as they did in other Parts of their Duty.

SERM. Duty. When Sin entered into the World,

VI. Ignorance and Darknefs soon followed ;

and the Depravity of Mens Wills quickly produced a Corruption of their Understandings. Hence it became requisite; or to speak more properly, our gracious and merciful Creator saw fit, in the *Fullness of Time*, to indulge the World *sitting in Darknefs*; to dispel its thick Mists, and re-enlighten it with the Beams of Revelation. Hereby the important Truths of Religion, before very dimly perceived, were fully brought to Light, and Mens natural Powers recruited and reinforced. But surely this new Light, no way interfered with the old; that is, Revelation could not be repugnant to Reason, however it might improve or go beyond it. Divine Communications may differ either in Kind, or in Degree; but they can never contradict each other. For Truth and Right, however discovered or dispensed, are of no variable Nature, but eternally the same. And as the Use of Reason and Understanding was never superseded by Revelation; so we may further take Notice, that the latter always supposed and required the former, and would indeed have been useless without it. Even the
Christian

Christian Revelation could have no In-SERM.
fluence, no Effect, on any other Suppo- VI.
sition. The Proofs of it must be exam-
ined and judged by Reason, or not at
all. Its Prophecies, Miracles, Doctrines,
Precepts, could no way be tried without
a rational Discussion; and the more ra-
tionally they were discussed, the more and
sooner Christianity must prevail. Well
therefore might the Apostle exhort Men
to cultivate their Reason, and exert their
Understandings. — Especially if it be fur-
ther considered, that this Revelation was
granted at a Time, when Learning and
Knowledge flourished most, and Arts and
Sciences were at their highest Pitch. At
such a Period, and in such a State, the
Neglect of Reason must have been very
unreasonable, and attended with ill Con-
sequences. Even Miracles and Inspira-
tion, however they might astonish Men,
would have lost a great Part of their Ef-
fect, if accompanied with Defects of Un-
derstanding, and the Disparagement of
Mens natural Powers. I am sensible the
Gospel was delivered with great Simplici-
ty, and intended so to be; but still it was
never at Variance with Truth and Rea-
son, nor any way injurious to Mens na-
tural

SERM. tural Faculties. Tho' our Saviour made

VI. Choice of illiterate Apostles, and support-

ed them in the Propagation of his Gospel with *Signs and Wonders and Demonstrations of the Spirit*, yet he never discountenanced the Exercise of their Understandings; so far from it, that he encouraged it upon all Occasions. A remarkable Precept of his, seems to have been the Pattern copied after by the Apostle in the Admonition before us: *Be ye wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.* The Use of Mens natural Powers he never disallowed; however he might condemn the *Abuse* of them. Tho' he was pleased to have his Religion propagated at first by *divine* Means and Methods, yet he was no Enemy to *human*; as well knowing that both sprung originally from the same Fountain, and that the former would soon be in a great Measure withdrawn.—Again; such Precepts were further requisite on account of those strong Prejudices which the Gospel had to encounter. The Doctrine of *Christ crucified* was not only a *Stumbling-Block to the Jews*, but to the Greeks, and other *Gentiles* mere *Foolishness*. Being ignorant of its Ground, Meaning and Design, they concluded it must be absurd
for

for that very Reason. Puff up with un-
sound *vain Philosophy*, they rejected with
Disdain whatever they could not im-
mediately comprehend: And had not the first
Preachers of it defended and supported it
by rational Means, as well as supernatural
Signs; this Prejudice would probably have
been much strengthened, and taken such
deep Root as never to be overcome.
Even our modern *Gentiles* seem yet en-
tangled in these Briars; and call out for
more Reason and Argument, amidst the
strongest Evidence of all Kinds; complain-
ing of neglected Reason in spite of my
Text, and the whole Tenor of the New
Testament. Well then might the Sages
and Sophists of Antiquity have stumbled
at the Doctrines of Christianity, had they
been published under such a Disadvan-
tage as we are now considering. Had
these Men found any Thing plainly ab-
surd, or manifestly repugnant to the Light
of Nature, they would soon have shut the
Door of their Minds against Conviction,
and have eluded the Force of the strong-
est Miracles. This would have proved
an invincible Obstacle to the Success of the
Gospel; especially among the more intel-
ligent Part of Mankind. No Philoso-
phers

SERM.
VI.

SERM. phers, no Men of Learning would then

VI. have become Converts ; whereas we know
the Fact was quite otherwise : If not at the
very first Publication of it, yet undoubtedly
soon after. The Truth is, no new Religion,
no Set of Doctrines could prevail in any Age,
among wise Men, which professed an Enmity to
Reason, or meant the Subversion of human Under-
standing. In short, whenever Reason and Re-
velation interfere and disagree, they cannot both
be real ; one of them must certainly be false.—
It appears then from what has been said, that
the Caution in my Text, and others of the like
Nature, directly conduce to the Credit and Suc-
cess of the Christian Religion. They tended greatly
to promote and facilitate its first Propagation ;
and are still of great Use to silence Gain-
sayers, and stop the Mouths of those who seek
for all Occasion of Censure and Disparagement.
As nothing more discredits and disappoints
pretended Revelations than enthusiastic Absur-
dity, and Opposition to good Sense ; so nothing
does more Honour to that of the Gospel, than
its constant Appeal to plain Evidence, and the
sober Decisions of right Reason. —

But

But in these Observations I have insensibly SERM.
VI.
broke into the Subject of my

Second Head, Namely the great Use and Importance of the Apostle's Precept. Here then I might enlarge on the general Advantages above-mentioned, redounding from hence to the Cause of Christianity: Shewing, that a rational Publication of rational Doctrines was necessary to recommend it to the thinking Part of Mankind; and that the Gospel could neither have spread so far, nor so fast, nor ever have fixed itself, and taken such firm Hold on the Minds of Men, on any other Supposition. Being planted and watered by supernatural Means, it might have shot up and flourished for a Time, as a strange Appearance, or a fashionable Novelty: But when Miracles ceased, and it was left to itself; had it not been a *reasonable Service*, it must have withered for Want of Root, or have been soon blasted by the Storms of Persecution. But insisting no further on these Considerations, I shall confine myself at present to the two following Points; namely, that both the *Satisfaction* and *Edification* of private Christians are very much promoted by that proper Use

SERM. Use of their rational Powers which the
VI. Apostle prescribes.

First then it greatly promotes the Satisfaction of their Minds. As *Reason* is our first and immediate Guide, and *Religion* our highest Concern; a due Harmony between them must appear not only very desirable, but necessary, to every considerate Christian. I speak of *revealed Religion*, which we are bound to receive with Reverence as soon as we are convinced of its Truth. But now this Conviction would be very much weakened, if not destroyed, supposing such a Revelation at Variance with our Reason. The former may, and indeed must go further than the latter; or it would be given to no Purpose. But it cannot contradict, or disannul it, without the utmost Confusion. Had this been the Case, Mens Inquiries would soon have been at a Stand, and they would have been forced to sit down in Darknes and Discontent. Let a private Christian judge and act with the greatest Probity and Sincerity; yet on *that* Supposition, he could not proceed, could not stir one Step with Conviction or Comfort. If the Scripture directed one Way, and his Conscience another; if he found

a Law in the Gospel warring against the SERM.
Law of his own Understanding; what VI.
Perplexity, what Uneasiness, what Dis-
order would attend such a Situation? On
the other Hand, when he observes no Dis-
cord or Disagreement; and Revelation
only appears to have restored and resumed
old Truths, and introduced such new ones
as Reason cannot object to, but entirely
approves; he examines it with Pleasure,
and submits to it with Comfort and Satis-
faction.—Had Christianity been a Fiction;
or the *Gospel* resembled the *Alcoran*; then
indeed the Precept in my Text would have
been very improper and inconvenient. In-
stead of being required to open our Eyes,
and cultivate our Understanding; we
should rather have been exhorted to muffle
both. For *what Communion has Light with
Darkness*, Truth with Falsehood, or Ar-
gument, with Absurdity? But as such a
Precept given infers the Truth and Ex-
cellence of the Christian Religion; so this
Truth and Excellence justifies that Pre-
cept; and makes the Observance of it very
desirable and satisfactory. Nay, the bet-
ter it is observed, and the more any Man
has improved his natural Faculties, the

SERM. more Comfort and Complacency he will

VI. find in the Gospel Revelation.

Secondly, As this Precept tends to the Satisfaction of Mens Minds, so it conduces very much to their Improvement and Edification. And this I shall briefly consider both with respect to *Faith* and *Practice*.— Concerning *Faith*, Men act unreasonably, when they either assent without Evidence, or demand immoderate Degrees of it. To yield Assent without Evidence, is indeed, strictly speaking, impossible; since the Understanding, like the Eye, can see nothing in the Dark. Nevertheless, a Man may impose on others, and even on himself, with a sort of imaginary Conviction: Or he may submit implicitly to the Dictates of Authority, and as it were, resign his Reason and Understanding blindfold to the Determinations of others. But such a Prostitution of his Faculties can neither be acceptable to God, nor beneficial to himself. Not the former, because such Talents could never be given him to *no* Purpose; nor to *any* Purpose more important than this: And therefore God certainly requires, that they be used and improved. Not the latter, because Man's
Per-

Perfection and Happiness depend on the Exercise of his Powers, and not on the Disuse or Resignation of them. A rational Conduct in the Settlement of our Principles and Persuasions, peculiarly tends to improve the Mind. For herein we not only exercise our Understandings, which is always beneficial; but we employ them and fix them on the noblest Objects. Whereas a blind Faith naturally ends in the Rust of the Mind, and the Corruption of its best Faculties.—On the other Hand, to demand immoderate Degrees of Evidence for Points offered to our Inquiry, is counteracting Reason, and perverting Judgment. It argues an unbecoming Opposition to the Nature of Things, and Impatience under the Lot and Condition of Humanity. It leads to Arrogance and Self-will, and tends to produce Habits of Obstinacy and Contention. It keeps out of the Mind many valuable Truths, which would both contribute to its Ornament and Advantage. In short, to judge rather by Fancy and Humour than Reason and Understanding, especially in Matters of Religion; is both a Disgrace, and a dangerous Depravation. —To lean then to

SERM.
VI.

SERM. either of the foregoing Extremes, is to

VI. act an unmanly Part in Opposition to the
 { Apostle's Counsel. If we would consult
 our own Credit, or the Honour of our
 Religion; if we would aim at the Improve-
 ment of our Minds, and the Advance-
 ment of our natural Powers; we shall e-
 qually avoid the Servility of a blind Faith,
 and the Perverseness of capricious Dissent.

Again; As in *Faith*, so in respect of
Practice, the Advantage of *rational* Mea-
 sures is very manifest, even through all
 the Branches of our Duty. In the Ser-
 vice and Worship of God, as nothing can
 be more unworthy, so nothing can be
 more unedifying than a blind, ignorant
 Devotion. Without just Conceptions of
 the Deity, the great Ends of Worship
 can never be answered. Whatever Mens
 Intentions or Dispositions may be, the
 Benefits must be, in a great measure lost.
 False Notions of God defeat the Ends of
 Contemplation; and render that Imitation
 dangerous, which otherwise leads directly to
 the Perfection of human Nature. Thence
 proceed the various Flights of Enthusiasm,
 and the Follies and Absurdities of Supersti-
 tion. Some fancy themselves, they know
 not how, the peculiar Friends and Favou-
 rites

rites of Heaven; and others imagine them-
 selves, they know not why, singled out
 for Objects of Wrath, and Monuments of
 Vengeance. What Pollutions of Religion,
 and Barbarities of Worship do we read of
 in the Gentile World! What miserable
 Means and Methods of Expiation! What
 horrid Victims, and Profusion of Blood!
 Not excepting, to the eternal Infamy of
 human Nature, even that of our own Spe-
 cies! Such were the Fruits of Ignorance
 and Darkness, of neglected Reason and
 uncultivated Understanding! Not that
 those Ages were destitute of all Improve-
 ments: In many Arts of Life, and sever-
 al Branches of Knowledge, a consider-
 able Progress was made. But in the great
 Affair of Religion, Men seemed to be *Sa-*
vages rather than *Men*; and nothing was
 to be seen or heard of but Rudeness and
 Barbarity: A tedious Round of ridiculous
 Rites, and stupid Ceremonies. If any
 Christians have relapsed into these gross
 Absurdities, the Case is much to be la-
 mented; but it only shews still further
 the great Use and Necessity of the Apo-
 stle's Precept.—To return; by serving and
 worshipping God in a rational way, we
 consult most effectually the Improvement

SERM. of our Minds and Morals. By ascribing
VI. to the great Governor of the World perfect Wisdom, Equity, and Goodness, and constantly setting him before us in this Light, we both honour him, and edify ourselves. Whether we pray or praise; this glorious Idea in View exalts the Mind, and strengthens its Faculties; engages and purifies our Affections, and inclines us to imitate that Excellence which we can never enough admire. Such a Service not only becomes intelligent Creatures; but is their highest Honour and Happiness, and will be for ever.

But further; the Right of Reason and Direction of Understanding is also very useful in respect of *social* Duties. The *Love of our Neighbour* is the Prescript both of natural and revealed Religion: But the Question is, how and in what Manner it is to be exercised? Benevolence must constantly work in our Hearts, and prompt us to Action; but to point out the Rules and Measures of Operation, is the Province of our *Understandings*. To wish well to Mankind, and promote their Welfare spiritual and temporal, as Power permits, and Opportunities offer, is most unquestionably our Duty: But to gratify all Inclinations,

clinations, and comply with all Humours, SERM. however unreasonable, capricious, or child- VI. ish, is neither *our* Duty nor *their* Interest. It is not Wisdom, but Weakness; not Kindness, but Cruelty; to cherish those Follies in others, which we ought not to indulge in ourselves. We are bound to support the Authority of Reason, as far as our Power or Influence extends. Hereby Benevolence is limited, and Charity restrained. As a rational Conduct must ever be expected from rational Creatures, and the Dignity of our Nature requires it; so nothing is more advantageous to the Public, nothing more improving or beneficial to ourselves.

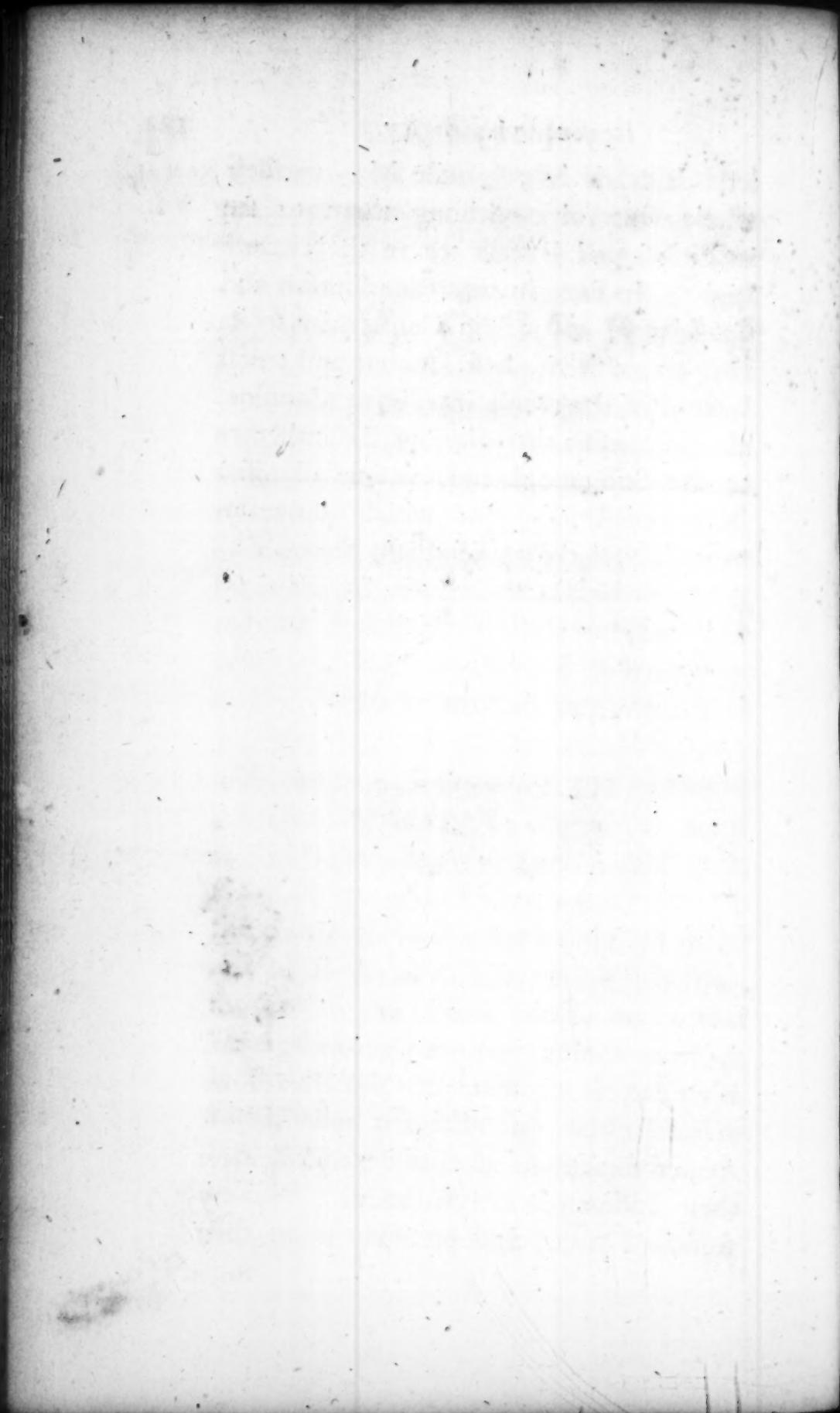
Lastly, the Exhortation in my Text is of great Importance in the Government of ourselves. To be *Men in Understanding*, is to think, judge, and act like Men. That is, to take Counsel of our Reason, and follow its Dictates with Steadiness and Resolution. To govern our Passions, and regulate our Appetites, by the Rules which it gives; and at all Times to guard and maintain its Laws inviolate. Nothing is more unmanly, nothing more dishonourable and shameful, than to subject Reason to Lust; and suffer that Divine Principle

SERM. to come under the Yoke, which was
VI. ordained to rule, and which indeed
ought to rule, by Supremacy of Nature, the whole Universe. But tho' Reason ought ever to sit at the Helm, and govern our Passions; yet it would not, it cannot destroy them. Neither will it oppose them absolutely, or controul them to no Purpose. Since they are natural to the human Frame, Reason will never propose their Extirpation; neither will it torment, or vex them in vain. It will keep them in Order, and govern them as Subjects, but not as Slaves. A rational Self-Conduct does not consist therefore of those ill-judged Rigours, and fruitless Austerities, which some Christians have practised; and even the Discipline of Appetite may be carried on better without them, than with them.

Upon the Whole, to cultivate our Natural Powers, and exercise our Understandings in Matters of Religion, is so far from being injurious to Revelation, or detrimental to ourselves; that it supports and strengthens the one, and peculiarly befriends the other. It not only improves our noblest Faculty, but qualifies us for higher Enjoyments both here and hereafter.

ter. It tends to reconcile Men to their SERM.
whole Duty, by enabling them to see VI.
its Fitness and Excellence in the clearest
Light. In fine, to reverence Reason and
Conscience, and act in Conformity to its
Dictates, is the highest Honour and truest
Interest of the whole intelligent Creation.
Herein consists that glorious Resemblance
to the Supreme Being, which dignifies
Men and Angels; and which, duly im-
proved, will distinguish them through all
Ages, and make them *Shine like Stars for
ever and ever.*







S E R M O N VII.

EDUCATION.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

*Train up a Child in the Way he
should go; and when he is old,
he will not depart from it.*

THE Corruption of human Na-^{SERM.}
ture is a Fact too visible and no- ^{VII.}
torious, to require any Proof, or
admit any Doubt. It is indeed,
by all thinking Men universally perceived,
confessed, and lamented. But however cer-
tain we are of the Effect, yet the Causes,
the true Causes, are not perhaps so clear,
as we commonly imagine: Or if the Causes
themselves be plain; there is however just
Reason to apprehend, that we miscalculate
their Influence and Efficacy. We lay
sufficient Strefs, and probably more than
suffi-

SERM. sufficient, on the *original* Cause; but

VII. on other subsequent ones, seldom enough.

— We are generally very willing, that our Faults and our Follies should be ascribed to our *first Parents*; and accordingly place the greatest Share of them to their Account: Not considering how much *may* be due to our immediate Parents, and how much certainly *is* due to ourselves.

Though many disbelieve it, and more disregard it, it is an evident Truth, that nothing contributes more to the Depravity of the World, and the Corruption of Mens Minds and Manners, than a loose, careless, licentious Education. Whenever and wherever this Disorder prevails; humanly speaking, it is not to be expected that Virtue should gain Ground, or even find any Footing. On the contrary, in Proportion to the Neglect of Education, Vice and Wickedness are sure to grow, and spread, and gather Strength from one Generation to another. If the Minds of Children be not cultivated, they naturally run wild; and if bad Seed be sown in them, nothing is ordinarily to be expected but a Harvest

of Immorality, or Superstition. This is SERM.
abundantly manifest from Reason, from VII.
Revelation, and from Experience; and
there are numberless Instances of it in all
Places, and in all Ages. But that the
Use and Importance of a good Education
may more distinctly appear, I shall briefly
consider it under the three following
Heads, to which it may not improperly
be reduced: I mean those of *Instruc-*
tion, Discipline, and Example. Concern-
ing the

First of these, *Instruction*; Every one
sees the Necessity of it: Which is so
plain and obvious, that no Man can miss
it who thinks at all on the subject.
'Tis well known, that whatever Portions
of Truth Men obtain afterwards, they
brought none into the World with them.
The Minds of young Children are mere
Blanks; which may be written on, or
blotted, at the Discretion of those to
whom they belong. Though they are
endued with certain Powers, Faculties,
and Affections; yet they are originally
destitute of all Ideas. Though they are
produced and formed with a Capacity for
Knowledge; yet the Materials for it are
received

SERM. received afterwards, and gathered by De-

VII. grees. By Nature they are prepared for

Instruction, and qualified to learn; but nevertheless are totally ignorant at first, and set out, as it were, in the Dark. —

Yet however unfurnished they may begin, they will not long continue so. External Objects present themselves early, and Clouds of sensible Ideas are flowing in upon them every Moment. And as the Mind is naturally active; if good and useful Thoughts be not infused into it betimes, it will easily be misengaged, and apt to take up with any Thing that offers. The Minds of Children must have Employment; will be in Motion, as well as their Bodies: And it depends almost intirely on the Care and Conduct of those about them, whether they shall imbibe Truth or Trash, Wisdom or Folly. Without due Cultivation, and proper Instruction, their Understandings will naturally run wild, and shoot up Weeds of various Kinds; till at length they are overrun and quite covered with Error and Absurdity. The Prejudices of Education are Matter of universal Complaint; and yet are oftentimes the least Part of the Grievance.

ance. Corrupt Notions and vicious Principles are too frequently the Consequence of the same fatal Neglect; and hence it comes to pass, that the Minds of Youth are tainted, and their Manners incurably depraved: Even so far as to become *Men* in *Mischief*, while in Years and *Understanding* they are mere *Children*. Bad Thoughts and bad Words are insensibly picked up by these Little Ones, before they be well able either to think, or speak; and such Progress they sometimes make in the Perversion of both Faculties, as to get through a compleat Course of Lewdness before they arrive at Years of Discretion. — It is therefore absolutely necessary to guard against these Corruptions early, by all proper and prudent Applications: More particularly, to season their Minds, as soon as possible, with wholesome Instruction. To prevent evil Thoughts, let good ones be instilled betimes; that their growing Faculties may have something to work on with Safety and Advantage, and their Minds be engaged, at first setting out, on the Side of Wisdom and Virtue. — It is indeed by no means proper, in this tender Age,
to

SERM.
VII.

SERM. to strain or burden their weak Under-

VII. standings either with Points too difficult,
or too great a Variety of such as are plain. For finding themselves puzzled, or overloaded, they would be so far from taking Pleasure in Instruction, which should always be carefully endeavoured, that they would naturally conceive an Aversion from it. Nevertheless they must be taught, must be instructed by little and little, as their Years and Capacities will bear; and all Means used to excite their Attention, and render it agreeable. Truth is so natural to all Minds, whether young or old, that it seldom would become distasteful, if there was no Failure in the Manner of Conveyance. Every Circumstance therefore tending to produce this mischievous Effect, should be carefully avoided; and the Paths of Knowledge made as level and smooth as possible.— Let it be further observed, that whatever Disadvantages Children lie under in respect of *Judgment* and *Conception*, they have generally great Advantage in Point of *Memory*; which in them is much stronger and more vigorous than in grown Persons. And even as to *Understanding*, they
are

are seldom incapable of taking in such SERM.
 Knowledge, and apprehending such VII.
 Truths as are proper for them; provided {
 they be gradually and gently instilled.
 And since the most important Truths
 are commonly the plainest; therefore, on
 both Accounts, they are fittest for younger
 Minds.—The Foundation then of Chil-
 drens Knowledge must be laid in such
 Doctrines and Precepts as are of the great-
 est Moment, and most suitable to their
 Apprehensions. Of the former Kind, is
 the Distinction between Soul and Body;
 the Being of a God, all-wise and all-per-
 fect, who made the World by his Power,
 and governs it by his Providence; the
 Certainty of another Life after this, where-
 in all Men will be judged and dealt with
 according to their Works. To these must
 be added, the divine Authority of the
 Scriptures; the Corruption and Degene-
 racy of human Kind, and the Redemp-
 tion of the World by our Lord Jesus
 Christ; the Remission of Sins, and the
 Necessity of Repentance and Renovation
 of Life; the Means of Grace, and the
 Hopes of Glory. These Doctrines must
 in due Time, and by gentle Degrees, be
 VOL. I. K plainly

SERM. plainly be plainly and familiarly incul-
 VII. cated. — Of the latter Kind are those
 practical Precepts which comprehend the
 great Rule of Life ; those unquestionable
 Duties which we owe to God, our Neigh-
 bour, and ourselves. Towards God, Re-
 verence, Submission, Affiance, Worship,
 Gratitude, and Love : Towards Man,
 Truth, Justice, Fidelity, Benevolence,
 Mercy, and Charity : Towards ourselves,
 Temperance, Sobriety, Humility, Exa-
 mination, and Self-Government. — These
 are the Heads of that Instruction, which
 is of the utmost Importance ; which is
 necessary at all Times and Seasons ; the
 Ground-work of all Wisdom, and the
 Foundation of all Happiness. Without
 this, whatever may be taught, or learnt,
 is comparatively of small Consequence :
 Without this the noblest Arts and Scien-
 ces are only vain Amusements, and solemn
 Trifles. *Whoever know these Things, happy
 are they if they do them.* In order to both,
 early Instruction is requisite ; before the
 Heart be hardened by any evil Habits,
 and while the Mind is flexible and yield-
 ing, and most susceptible of good Im-
 pressions. — If Men wish well to their
 Children, as all but Monsters certainly
 do,

do, they must desire to see them engaged in good Courses. And how can they reasonably expect this, if they train them up heedlessly, and take little or no Care of their Minds and Manners? To bring them up in Ignorance of their Duty, and leave them to find out as they can the first Truths of Religion; is, in Effect, to send them out into a wide World blind, naked, and defenceless; liable to go astray at every Turn, and to stumble every Step they take.—No Opportunities should be lost, of convincing them how reasonable and how beneficial it is to do well, and how unreasonable and mischievous to do ill. Let them hear continually that the Ways of Virtue and Goodness are the high Road to Happiness; and that a vicious and profligate Course of Life, however it may delude for a while, will infallibly end in Ruin and Destruction. To set this before them in a strong Light, and fix it deep in their Minds, should be the constant Aim and Endeavour of all Parents; as being indeed the most important and most necessary Truth, that they

SERM.

VII.

SERM. can teach, or their Children ever learn.

VII. The

Second Head which I proposed to treat of, is *Discipline*. A Point not to be omitted, though perhaps less proper for this Place. The Truth is, 'tis so essential a Part of Education, and yet so commonly either neglected or misapplied; that to pass it by, and leave it wholly unconsidered, would be doing great Injustice to the Subject. God has given Men Reason and Understanding to enable them to discern their Duty and Interest; to qualify them also for the Direction of their own Conduct, and the Government of themselves. But this important Faculty opens, and unfolds itself by Degrees, and is of little Use at our first setting out. In our Infancy quite useless, and in Childhood little better. Time and Experience are requisite for its Cultivation; and whatever Care be taken, it ripens but slowly, gently, and gradually. Most evident therefore it is, that young Children are utterly unfit to be left to the Direction and Conduct of their own green Understandings. — Especially if it be considered, that however weak their Un-

Understandings may be, and however SERM.
slowly they gather Strength; yet with VII.
their Appetites and Passions the Case is
quite contrary. These are strong origi-
nally; and moreover advance so fast, and
make such quick Progress, that the Ra-
tional Powers can never keep pace with
them; but are far outstripped, and left
behind at a great Distance.—Since
then the Understandings of Children are
always insufficient; very necessary it is,
that their Appetites and Passions be go-
vern'd by the Reason and Understanding
of their Parents. For Rule and Govern-
ment they must have. Were Children to
be left entirely to the Conduct of their
own Wills, and the Swing of their
own Passions, what less could be expected
than speedy Ruin? As safe would they
be in the Paws of a wild Beast, as in the
Hands of their own brutal Appetites.
These, unrestrained, will not fail to draw
them into all manner of Disorders both
of Body and Mind. Wherever the Ap-
petites govern, this is more or less the
perpetual Consequence. And the same
may be said of the Passions; which, if
not early curbed, produce ill Effects with-

SERM. out Number. Hence Children frequently become intractable, fierce, headstrong; impatient of all Opposition, and unconquerably obstinate. Their Minds harden continually, and their Manners become more and more licentious. Instead of learning Humanity, Decency, and Gentleness of Behaviour, they run into Rudeness and Barbarity; contracting furious Habits, and savage Dispositions.— Is it then likely that such Disorders will be rectified, when they arrive at a fuller Use of their Understandings? Is it not rather to be feared, that Reason, when it does come, will come too late? And prove, in a great measure, impotent and useless? It may and will inform them, in most Cases, what is right, and what is wrong; what is beneficial, and what mischievous; and require them to proceed and practise accordingly. But what then? Where the Passions are broken loose, and have taken Possession of the Mind; Reason is seldom regarded, or even heard. This too often happens in every Stage of Life; much more in Youth and Childhood. In short, of all the Evils which infest our present State,

a more fruitful Source cannot easily be found. — Admitting then the Necessity of Discipline, as surely it must be admitted; and taking it for granted, that the Appetites and Passions of Children must be carefully ruled and restrained; the next Question is, how this may most properly and effectually be done; so as to answer the End, and avoid all Extremes. For indeed Extremes there are; and Parents are commonly very prone to run into them. Are young Children to be always treated with Rigour and Severity? To be constantly managed with a high Hand, and a strict Rein? By no Means. Certainly there is a great Difference between bending their Wills, and breaking their Spirits; between a filial Awe, and a slavish Fear; between a decent Behaviour, and a State of Bondage. To direct and govern them within the Bounds of Moderation, is Kindness and Wisdom; but to tyrannize over them, and torment them needlessly, is both Cruelty and Folly. Very much indeed depends on their Tempers and Dispositions, which are widely different; some requiring greater Strictness, others less, and others none at all. But in ge-

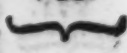
SERM. neral, it seems most agreeable both to
VII. Nature and Reason, to prefer gentle
Methods; and even to avoid all Severities, till they become necessary. — Children are naturally active, lively, full of Spirits, and impatient of Rest. Partly on this Account, and partly through Want of Experience, they are generally careless, unthinking, and inattentive; ever prone to commit, and frequently committing, little Errors and Miscarriages; which ought to be patiently suffered, if not quite overlooked. Such Faults as these, if they may be called Faults, scarce require Notice much less Correction. For surely it must be very unreasonable, and very imprudent, to correct Children merely for being Children. By rash and inconsiderate Parents we often see childish and criminal Actions confounded, and treated alike. Whereas the Difference is manifestly great; and therefore the Distinction should be carefully and constantly maintained. — But further; even when Children commit real and considerable Faults, it is not expedient to recur immediately to severe Measures. On the contrary, 'tis always proper to begin with soft Admonitions, and gentle Reproofs.
And

And if they appear insensible of Praise SERM.
and Dispraise, and the Principle of Shame VII.
has little or no Effect; the next Step is
to work on their Hopes and Fears by
Threats and Promises. But if these also
fail of their due Operation; if Children
still continue to do amiss, and shew
themselves disobedient, froward, and per-
verse; Correction becomes not only fit-
ting, but necessary; and that in Propor-
tion to the Stubbornness of their Wills,
and the Hardness of their Hearts. It is
in this Case that *Solomon's* Observation is
fulfilled; *He that spareth the Rod, hateth
his Son. Hateth him, how?* Not that
he wants natural Affection; but because
he ruins him by Indulgence and Neglect
of Discipline. And indeed when Chil-
dren offend presumptuously and obsti-
nately, and all fair Means are used in
vain; every Pardon that is granted them
heightens their Danger, and hastens their
Destruction. — As then Rigour is one
Extreme, so Indulgence is another: And
because more natural, therefore more com-
mon. The Truth is, it produces more
Mischief and Misery among Mankind,
than any other Instance of Misconduct.
Nay, it may justly be affirmed, that nei-
ther

SERM.ther Sword, nor Famine, nor Pestilence,

VII. have been so pernicious as this very Failure
in Point of Education. Most of the Vices, Excesses, and Enormities of Life are principally owing to this Cause. The chief Reason why many Men are so wicked and profligate in the Course of their Lives, is because their Appetites and Passions were uncurbed and uncontrolled in their Childhood. Through the Want of early breaking, they grew wild and vicious, and were never to be civilized or tamed after. But

Thirdly, To Instruction and Discipline must be added the Benefit of a good *Example*. In vain do Children hear what is good, if they see what is evil. Virtue must be set before their Eyes, as well as founded in their Ears. Imitation is very natural, and more especially in Children; who insensibly learn to do whatever is done in their Sight. Hence it is that good Examples are so engaging and prevalent, and bad ones so catching and contagious. Whatever Parent gives his Children good Instruction, and sets them at the same time a bad Example, may be considered as bringing them Food in one Hand, and Poison in the other. While they perceive such a Disagreement between Words and
Actions,

Actions, the former will have small SERM.
Weight, and be lightly regarded. And VII.
indeed how can it be expected, that they 
should be much influenced by those Rules
and Precepts which they see continually
broken before their Eyes? This Part of
Education therefore, is requisite to give
Force and Success to the rest. I say to give
Force, because of its peculiar Efficacy;
which is seldom to be resisted. A good
Example is Virtue animated; than which
nothing is more amiable and attractive,
nothing more striking. But it is not need-
ful to enlarge on a Point so well known,
and universally confessed. Though it be
duly considered by few, it is disputed by
none.

It is equally needless to insist on the
Proof of the latter Clause in my Text;
the Connexion between that and the for-
mer being most manifest, *Train up a
Child in the Way he should go, and when
he is old he will not depart from it.* 'Tis
well known that such Maxims are never
meant to exclude every possible Excep-
tion; but only to signify the ordinary
Course, and general Event of Things.
However *a Child be trained up*, he may in-
deed depart from the right Way: And,
from

SERM. from a Concurrence of unfortunate Acci-

VII. dents, this does in Fact, and will sometimes happen. But yet a virtuous Education yields the fairest Probability that natural Means can afford; and, it is to be hoped, they rarely miscarry who are blessed with it. Their Prospect of Success is clear and strong; and, humanly speaking, vastly more hopeful, than theirs can be, who were brought up in Vice, or educated at Random. We cannot be ignorant how great is the Force of *Habits*; especially of those which are acquired early. Even the very first Impressions of Religion, which are made on young and tender Minds, seldom wear out: So far from it, that they help greatly, on various Occasions, to reduce those who are led astray. In short, a good Education is the strongest of all human Securities, and the surest Foundation that can be laid for Virtue and Happiness.

Do then Men really desire that their Children may do well both here and hereafter? Are they truly solicitous for their Safety and Success? Would they gladly have them prosper in their highest Concerns, and become wise, and good, and

and happy? Let them train them up be-
times to Virtue and Religion, Truth and
Probity. Let them teach them to *do Jus-*
tice, love Mercy, and walk humbly before
God. Without all Question this is the
greatest Kindness they can do them; and
I venture to add, the best and most last-
ing Portion they can provide for them.
When worldly Treasure shall be fled and
gone, and vanished as a Dream, this will
endure and stay with them for ever. Virtue
is a Good so durable and solid, that no-
thing can either destroy or diminish it:
No Changes or Chances can shake it, nor
the Teeth of Time touch it. When all
exterior Objects shall be mouldered away,
and dissolved into Dust; when every En-
joyment of Life shall fail, and the World
itself be no more seen; even then shall
Virtue live, and flourish, in full Strength
and Vigour; shall enter into new Regions
of Light and Glory, and take Possession of
that heavenly Inheritance, which fadeth not
away, but endureth for ever.

SERM.
VII.



S E R M O N VIII.

Spiritual Worship.

JOHN IV. 24.

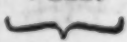
God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and Truth.

TH E S E Words are a Part of S E R M. our Saviour's Conference with V I I I. the *Woman of Samaria*; who having discovered him by his Discourse to be a *Prophet*, as she expresses herself, immediately consults him on the great Point of Controversy between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, concerning the right Place of Worship. *Our Father*, says she, *worshipped in this Mountain, and*
ye

SERM. *ye say that in Jerusalem is the Place where*

VIII. *Men ought to worship.* Hereupon our Saviour informs her that the Ground of this Controversy would speedily be removed. For whereas the Worship of both *Jews* and *Samaritans* consisted chiefly in external Sacrifices, and was confined to one Place, the Time was near at Hand when God would be worshipped indifferently in all Places, and that with spiritual Sacrifice, and the true Worship of the Mind; and by Consequence that there would be no longer any Room or Occasion for that mischievous Dispute. *The Hour cometh, says he, and now is, when the true Worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. For the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.*

The Foundation of the Duty here laid down appears plainly to be the spiritual Nature of the Deity. *God is a Spirit:* Which, according to our Conceptions, is an invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible, intelligent, active Substance: Qualities essential to the Nature of Spirits, and ascribed to the Supreme in the highest Degree, and most absolute Perfection. This

Idea is only to be apprehended by the SERM.
Understanding; as being evidently no VIII.
Object either of Sense, or Imagination. 
And these Powers generally engrossing,
in a great measure, our Attention; hence
it comes to pass that the Idea of a Spirit
makes so unsubstantial and shadowy a
Figure in our Minds, as it commonly
does; while the Appearance of corporeal
Objects is just the reverse. Whereas com-
paratively speaking, these latter should ra-
ther be reputed mere Shadows. Misled
by Custom and Prepossession. we are apt
to ascribe that to Body, which belongs
peculiarly to Spirit; enriching the former
at the Expence of the latter: The Con-
sequence of which is, that we generally
misapprehend both till they come to be
separated; an Event so frequent and fa-
miliar, as might be thought sufficient to
undeceive us entirely. While it continues
animated, we are prone to consider a
human Body as the principal Part, and
perhaps almost the whole Man. But when
Death has separated the Soul from it, and
we see it mouldering into Dust and Corrup-
tion, we are then convinced, though we
soon forget it again, how inconsiderable
and vile the Body is in Comparison of the
VOL. I. L Soul.

SERM. Soul. In like manner, could we possibly
VIII. suppose Wisdom and Power quite removed
out of the World, the whole Universe would sink into an Heap of Dust. The Luminaries of Heaven, immensely great and glorious as they are, can only be vast Combinations of Atoms, or minute Particles, disposed and conducted by infinite Power and Wisdom. All that Form, Force, and Beauty, which we ascribe to Matter, are entirely owing to the Operation and Energy of Spirit; which agitates and enlivens the whole Mass, and keeps the Wheels of Nature in perpetual Motion.—I might further observe that only a pure Spirit is capable of those Perfections which always are, and unavoidably must be, ascribed to the Deity. For as Matter is necessarily finite, and passive, and unintelligent; it is quite incompatible with the Nature of God: Who knowing no Bounds, understands perfectly, and acts incessantly, thro' all Space and Duration.—We find indeed the Scripture frequently making use of corporeal Allusions, and representing the Divine Attributes under the Idea of human Organs. Thus the Hand of God denotes his Power, and his all-seeing

seeing Eye exhibits Omniscience. But SERM.
 scarce any Christian is so ignorant as not VIII.
 to know that these, and the like Ex-
 pressions, are figurative; used only by
 way of Accommodation to our weak Fa-
 culties; who are so accustomed to con-
 ceive by the Help of Images, that we
 seldom think to any Purpose without
 them. Yet notwithstanding this Conde-
 scension to our Infirmities, we have at
 the same Time the fullest Assurance from
 Scripture that God is perfectly incorporeal
 and spiritual, and bears no other Relation
 to Matter, than that of having created,
 and governed it, according to his own
 good Pleasure.

This being premised concerning the
 Proposition in my Text, I proceed to
 consider the Precept connected with it,
 and built on it: *And they that worship
 him, must worship him in Spirit and in
 Truth.* By Divine Worship in general we
 mean a just and reverential Conception
 of God, acknowledged and testified by
 such Ways and Means as Religion pre-
 scribes. Men may indeed worship him se-
 cretly and privately in their Closets, or in
 their Minds; but the Honour of God,
 and the Good of Mankind, requiring also

SERM. and more especially a Public Worship,
 VIII. in this Sense the Word is generally understood: As we find indeed it was by the *Samaritan* Querist. For the Worship of God at *Jerusalem* was public in the highest Degree; the whole Nation of the *Jews* assembling there for that Purpose. But in Relation to all Kinds of Worship wherein we address ourselves to God, the present Question is what is meant by the Qualifications laid down in my Text: That is, what we are to understand by *worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth.*

This Expression has been by some so rigorously interpreted, as to contend for a Worship merely and intirely spiritual, and exclude all bodily Appendages. Not only fit Postures, and becoming Gestures, but even the Use of Words has been rejected by them. They would have the whole Duty transacted secretly in Mens Minds and Thoughts, and confined strictly thereto; no verbal Prayers, or vocal Praises, but mental Devotion, and silent Adoration. On the same Account all external and visible Rites have been disapproved, as inconsistent with spiritual Worship, and Deviations from the Rule
 in

in my Text. We may and ought to SERM.
hope that the Defenders of this Opinion VIII.
mean well; but surely they judge amiss. }
For nothing can be more absurd, nothing
more repugnant to Scripture and Reason
than this very Doctrine; as may be shewn
in a few Words. For did not our Sa-
viour himself make Use of oral Prayer,
worshipping and praising God with his
Lips, as well as in his Mind? Nay fur-
ther, did he not prescribe a Form of
Words, a Model of Prayer, for the Use
of his Disciples? Other bodily Modes of
Worship were likewise observed both by
himself, and his Apostles; as Kneel-
ing, Prostration, and the like. As to
external Rites, commonly so called, he
not only complied with others, but or-
dained some of his own. How then can
we either need or require any other
Proof, or Authority? So far has he been
from countenancing the foregoing Inter-
pretation, that he has given a plain and
full Sanction to the Reverse. — And if we
inquire into the Reason of the Thing,
the Point is equally clear. As Man is
a compound Being, made up of two
distinct Natures, Soul and Body, what
can be more natural, what more reason-

SERM. able, than to glorify God with both, as
 VIII. far as he is capable? The Angels indeed
 being, as we suppose, pure Spirits, are
 necessarily confined to mental Worship;
 excepting when they assume corporeal
 Organs: But Men who have them natu-
 rally, should certainly employ them in
 the Service of their Maker. This mixed
 Worship, as we may call it, is manifest-
 ly as suitable to the human Frame, as
 purely spiritual is to the Angelic. If in-
 deed such a corporeal Homage obstructed
 that of the Mind, and interfered with
 the spiritual Worship required in my
 Text; it would be difficult, if not im-
 possible, to answer such an Objection.
 But this is so far from being the Case, that
 the former very plainly tends to the Pro-
 motion and Improvement of the latter;
 as might be shewn at large, did not every
 Man's Experience render it needless.—
 What then can be alledged, with any
 Colour of Reason, against vocal Worship?
 How can we better employ our Tongues,
 than in uttering the Donor's Praise, and
 celebrating his Perfections? Are we so
 liberal of our Speech, so lavish of our
 Words, on all other Occasions, and shall
 we be dumb in divine Worship? So far
 is

is this from gaining the Apostle's Appro-
bation, that he represents it as the great-
est Glory of the *Tongue*, that *therewith*
blefs we God even the Father. To which
may be added, that it would not be in
our Power to *confess him* at all *before*
Men, if the Whole of religious Worship
was confined and shut up within our
Breasts.

SERM.
VIII.

Since then this is not not the Case,
and the Worship required in my Text
cannot be merely spiritual, I shall pro-
ceed to inquire in what Sense the Precept
is to be understood. For though worship-
ping God in Spirit and Truth do not ex-
clude bodily Service, as we have already
seen, yet it must mean to exclude and
oppose some Kinds and Modes of Wor-
ship. *First* then we are to understand it
in Opposition to the carnal and typical
Worship of the *Mosaic* Law; which
consisted chiefly in external Sacrifices, and
a vast Multiplicity of Rites and Ceremo-
nies. These were appointed, or rather
indulged to the *Jews*, in Condescension
to their hard Hearts, and intractable Dis-
positions. And some of them were also
intended as *Shadows of Things to come*;
that is, as Types and Prefigurations of the

SERM. great Events to be accomplished under
 VIII. the Gospel Dispensation. Their Ends being then answered, and their Meaning fulfilled, they gave Way to a purer and nobler Worship; and the legal Rites, and gross Oblations, were exchanged for the spiritual Sacrifices of Praise and Thanksgiving. Instead of Types and Shadows, and local Institutions, a real and substantial Worship was universally demanded. This we read sublimely couched in the Words of the Prophet: *From the Rising of the Sun to the Going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every Place Incense shall be offered to my Name, and a pure Offering.*

Secondly, We are to understand the Precept before us in Opposition to Idolatry, and all the various Kinds of false Worship therein included. Not only that of fictitious Gods, and their Idols; but to the Exhibition of the true God under any corporeal Representation, or visible Form. Of this the *Samaritans* are supposed to have been guilty, in representing and worshipping the true Deity under the Form of a Dove. And well had it been for Christianity, if this absurd Practice had never been found out of the Bounds
 of

of *Samaria*. However the Fact be, sure SERM.
VIII.
we are that it falls under a Divine Prohibition. Even the *Jews* were strictly charged *to take good Heed unto themselves, that they corrupted not themselves with graven Images, and fancied Similitudes.* And the Reason is so plain, that it cannot be missed by any impartial and attentive Inquirer. But

Thirdly, The Worshipping of God in Spirit and Truth, manifestly excludes all feigned and pretended Service; the mere Form, and outward Appearance or Devotion. For this is as remote from the Mind or Spirit, as it is from Truth; and indeed can be thought no better than profane Mockery. To serve God only in Shew in Semblance, when our Hearts are far from him, is so far from being *a pure Offering*, that it is impious Diffimulation, and a great Indignity. I speak not of those wandering Thoughts which are accidental, and involuntary; and to which the most sincere Worshippers are, in some Measure, obnoxious. Though even these should be guarded against with constant Care; as defeating the Duty, for a Time, and obstructing the good Ends proposed by it. Vain and worthless are
all

SERM. all our Words, while our Minds are absent. **VIII.** The best Form of Worship, during such an Absence, is mere empty Sound, and a dead Office. — Having thus seen what the Precept excludes and opposes, we may readily discover what it means, and wherein it consists.

To worship God then *in Spirit and Truth*, is to worship him as our Creator and Governor, sincerely, unfeignedly, and devoutly, with our Minds and Bodies, in Acts of Prayer and Adoration, Thanksgiving and Praise: It is to offer him the pure Sacrifice of a humble and willing Mind, a grateful Heart, and a contrite Spirit: It is to make him the immediate Object of our Veneration and Worship, without the Intervention of bodily Figures, or sensible Representations: It is to conceive and acknowledge, as far as we are able, his supreme Excellence, and boundless Perfection: It is to declare and testify our inward Sense, of his infinite Power and Purity, Wisdom and Goodness; our Dependence on his sacred Word, and Submission to his righteous Will; our Regard to his Providence, and Reverence for his Laws: It is to manifest our Conviction of his awful Majesty,
and

and his amiable Mercy; of his perpetual SERM.
Benificence, Kindness, Lenity, and Love: VIII.
In fine, it is to set forth our Belief and
Acknowledgment of his universal Pre-
sence, and perpetual Privity to all our
Thoughts, Words, and Actions; whose
Inspection nothing escapes, and from whose
Jurisdiction no Creature is or can be set
free. — These and the like Particulars
are contained, or implied, in the pure
spiritual Worship enjoined in my Text.

I go on in the next Place to consider
briefly the Grounds of the Duty thus ex-
plained. And these are to be deduced
partly from the Nature of the Worship-
per, and more especially, as we find in
my Text, from the Nature of Him who
is the great Object of our Worship. *God*
is a Spirit, purely and entirely such; and
even Man is chiefly so. A Worship there-
fore merely external must be very unsuit-
able and repugnant to both; as neither
conducting to the Glory of the former,
nor the Benefit and Improvement of the
latter. And indeed, strictly speaking,
God is not worshipped at all, when he is
not worshipped in *Spirit and Truth*. With-
out this whatever we can say, or do, or
offer, is but the Shell of Piety, the mere

SERM. Carcase of Devotion. A Worship with-
VIII. out Thought, however pompous to the
Eye, is even worse than a Sacrifice with-
out a Heart. Had not God crowned the
Wonders of his Creation with the Pro-
duction of living Minds, the whole Uni-
verse, great and splendid as it is, had been
a dead Scene, and a lifeless Picture. With-
out intelligent Spectators, the Order and
Beauty of the World could glorify God
no more than a Chaos: And were all
intelligent Creatures as corrupt, degene-
rate, and heedless as Man, how would
the Creator's Glory be obstructed! How
has that pure Worship, that spiritual Ho-
mage which God requires, been lost and
buried in all Ages under gross Rites, and
senseless Superstitions! True Piety was so
decayed, and almost effaced in the Minds
of Men, that a Course of the greatest Mi-
racles was needful to restore it. They
not only deified one another, but brute
Animals, and inanimate Beings, and even
Non-existents; whatever indeed Folly was
able to conceive, or Fancy to suggest:
While at the same Time the true Deity
was quite unknown by some, and disre-
garded by others; and his Glory often
transferred to graven Images, and stupid
Idols:

Idols: Which the Apostles emphatically SERM.
 calls *changing the Truth of God into a Lye.* VIII.
 A Lye indeed of a practical Kind; but of
 great Malignity, and with all manner of
 Impiety; as directly tending not only to
 dishonour the Deity, but to bring divine
 Worship under all possible Contempt. As
 well might Men have represented Light
 by Shades and Darknes, as the Perfec-
 tions of a pure Spirit by the Imperfec-
 tions of gross Matter. Similitude there
 could be none; but there might have
 been less Contrariety and Opposition. For
 worshipping the Lights of Heaven there
 might be some Colour, some Excuse, in
 the darker Ages; but for Men to wor-
 ship Stocks and Stones, was only proving
 themselves little better.—The Rituals of
 the *Mosaic* Law, tho' of divine Institu-
 tion, were by no Means acceptable in
 themselves; nay they were disagreeable
 and offensive to the Deity; as we find
 him declaring by the Mouth of the Pro-
 phet. *To what Purpose is the Multitude
 of your Sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord.
 Bring no more vain Oblations; Incense is an
 Abomination unto me.* And again by the
 Psalmist; *Hear O my People, and I will
 speak;*

SERM. *Speak; I will take no Bullock out of thy*
 VIII. *House, nor He-goat out of thy Folds: for*
every Beast of the Forest is mine, and the
Cattle upon a thousand Hills: Offer unto
God Thanksgiving, and pay thy Vows unto
the most High. Vain are all outward Rites,
 worthless are all Oblations, where the
 Mind is unaffected and unconcerned. For
 a due Conception and Acknowledgment of
 God's Perfections is the very Essence of
 Divine Worship. And if these are either
 unknown, or unregarded; if the Mind
 is grossly ignorant, or sensual, or even
 absent; an Appearance of Worship there
 may be, but nothing more. In short, all
 true Honour is seated in Thought; and
 cannot be separated from it without losing
 its Nature, and becoming impure and
 corrupt. And all Worship therefore merely
 external must be counterfeit and spurious;
 as being a vile Mixture of Absurdity and
 Folly, Vanity and Superstition.

And as it is repugnant to the Nature
 of God, and therefore injurious to his
 Honour, so it is unnatural in the Wor-
 shipper; whose superior Part is Mind,
 tho' in Alliance with Matter. And the
 Improvement and Purification of that
 Mind

Mind is the highest Interest of the Man; SERM. VIII.
as conducing directly to his greatest Happiness and Perfection. False Worship, of
any of the Kinds before-mentioned, depraves the Mind instead of improving it;
by shutting out the Light, and plunging it deeper in Ignorance and Darkness; and
by attaching it more strongly to Sense, and Passion, and corporeal Affections. On
the other Hand, pure spiritual Worship raises and refines its Faculties, by em-
ploying them in the noblest Manner. That great and glorious Object whereon
it fixes the Mind, manifestly tends to its great Advantage and Improvement. The
Idea of God, even in bare Contemplation, exalts, enlivens, and enriches the
Soul, just as the Sun invigorates the Body. But this holds more especially true
in the Addresses of Devotion, which naturally excite a quicker Sense both of his
Favours, and our own Obligations. Such an Object of Worship, attentively regard-
ed, strikes our Minds with a profound Admiration, and a pious Reverence. His
Greatness inspires awful Thoughts, and his Goodness grateful Affections. All the
Powers of our Souls are stirred up and quick-

SERM. quickened ; and by an habitual Survey of
VIII. God's Perfections, we are powerfully
drawn to an Imitation of them. And what
can be more beneficial or improving to
the Mind of the Worshipper ? Especially
if we consider that it is a necessary Prepara-
tion for a future State ; in which Divine
Worship will never cease, as far as it con-
sists of Praise and Thanksgiving. It must
needs therefore be of great Use to accus-
tom ourselves to the Practice of a Duty,
which will be a Part of our Employment
and Felicity for ever.

The Consideration of this Doctrine
gives us just Cause to admire and con-
fess the peculiar Excellence of Christi-
anity, above all other Religions in the
World. If we enquire after the Na-
ture of the Deity, and ask how he is to
be worshipped ; other Religions will give
us such Answers and Accounts, as no ra-
tional Man is able to endure. We shall
receive such horrid Representations of the
one, and such Heaps of Absurdity and
Superstition in Relation to the other, as
will make us apt to lament over the Fol-
lies and Frailties of Human Nature. But
the Gospel wipes off this Disgrace, and
removes

removes our Disgust. It paints Religion SERM.
in such amiable Colours, and prescribes a VIII.
Worship so edifying and manly, so pure
and sublime, that the strictest Philoso-
phers cannot object to it; nay the very
Angels themselves might join in the Ce-
lebration of it. Instead of adoring the
Host of Heaven, or Mortals departed;
instead of inanimate Objects, lying Vani-
ties, the Works of Mens Hands; we are
directed to the living God, the Father of
Spirits, and Maker of all Things; and
required to worship him in all the Dignity
of Devotion, and the Beauty of Holiness.
— But after all, what avails this Purity of
Religion, or Perfection of Worship, if we
only boast of it in Speculation, and ne-
glect it in Practice? Or what will it profit
us that we are led into a right Way, if
we refuse to *walk* in it *worthy of our Vo-*
cation? If we suffer ourselves to be drawn
from public Worship, tho' the best upon
Earth, by any vain Amusement, or trivial
Avocation. On this Supposition, it will
be so far from answering the Ends pro-
posed, that it will aggravate our Guilt,
and increase our Condemnation. Or if,
in like Manner, we *glorify not God as God*;
but transfer our Regard, and fix our Af-
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SERM. fections on some despicable Rival; if following our own Inventions, we set up an
 VIII. Idol in our Hearts, and fall down before a darling Passion; we not only abuse the forementioned Privileges, but really incur the Guilt of Idolatry. In fine, we are under all possible Obligations to serve God with Fidelity and Care, proportionable to the Means and Opportunities he has given us. This is our bounded Duty, and our eternal Interest. Let us therefore make a wise and grateful Use of the Advantages we enjoy; devoting ourselves, our Souls and Bodies, to his Honour and Service. *Let us enter his Gates with Thanksgiving, and his Courts with Praise. Let us exalt him in the Congregation of the People, and magnify him in the Assembly of the Faithful.* For he is worthy of all Honour, and Worship, and Adoration, now, henceforth, and for evermore.



S E R M O N IX.

The Vanity and Vexation of irregular Desires.

ECCLES. VI. 9th Verse.

*Better is the Sight of the Eyes,
than the Wandering of the De-
sire; this is also Vanity and Vex-
ation of Spirit.*

TH O' it must be confessed, that ^{SERM.}
the Enjoyments of this Life ^{IX.}
are very imperfect, and can-
not yield us real Happiness,
properly so called; yet it is equally cer-
tain, that we might often be much hap-
pier than we are. We deprive ourselves
of many Comforts, and expose ourselves
to many Disappointments, merely through
our own Mis-conduct. When by our

SERM. Carelessness we have missed our Road,

IX.  struck into By-paths, and entangled ourselves among Thorns and Briars; instead of acknowledging our own Folly which led us astray, we are apt to complain of our Lot, and to think more hardly of it than it deserves. The Truth of this Observation might be shewn in a great Variety of Instances; but at present I shall confine myself to that which is censured in my Text. I shall repeat the Words, and then explain them. *Better is the Sight of the Eyes than the Wandering of the Desire; this is also Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* That is, it is better to make a wise Use of what lies before us, and to enjoy quietly and contentedly what we have; than to let our Desires be continually running out after fresh Objects, and shifting from Point to Point; such restless Pursuits being not only vain and unprofitable, but creating us abundance of needless Trouble and Perplexity. We are very apt to *overlook* the Blessings which we possess; and therefore a due Regard for them, and a prudent Enjoyment of them, here recommended by our Royal Author, are elegantly expressed by *the Sight of the Eyes.*

Eyes. In the Words thus explained, three SERM.
Particulars offer themselves to be confi- IX.
dered ;

First, That *Wandering of the Desire*
here spoken of as a Disposition incident
to Mankind.

Secondly, The *Vanity and Vexation of*
Spirit ascribed thereunto.

Thirdly, Another Temper of Mind,
another Method of Life, to which
the Preference is here given ; and
which is signified by *the Sight of the*
Eyes.

First, I am to consider that *Wandering*
of the Desire here spoken of ; and which
certainly would not have been mentioned,
had it not been a Disposition incident to
Mankind, and what they are prone to
fall into. This is evident from the par-
ticular Descriptions given of it by our wise
Author ; and is but too fully confirmed
by common Experience and Observa-
tion. — It may justly be questioned,
whether any Thing in the World be less
fixed, and more apt to wander, than the
Desires of Men. As the Objects of them
are very numerous, so it is impossible to

SERM. termine the Turns and Variations of our

IX. Choice. We shift and change, like and

 dislike, reject and prefer; and very often can neither tell how, nor why. Our fickle Fancies lead us the Way; and we are content to follow them; whether for the better, or the worse. Tho' we have not the least Benefit in View, but perhaps a Disadvantage, yet still we must change; we are tempted by Novelty, and prompted by a wandering Humour, that will not suffer us to be at Rest. Many Objects are pursued by us with Eagerness and Impatience, and seem to be highly valued till they come into our Possession; and when we have them in our Hands, we very often throw them aside, and despise them, with all the Levity of Children.—It must be allowed that this is frequently Fact, whatever be the Reason of it. To impute it entirely to the Mutability of our Minds, and the Inconstancy of our Tempers, would perhaps be unjust. A good deal of it is probably owing to the Emptiness and Unsatisfactoriness of all worldly Enjoyments. Tho' they look fair in the Prospect, and glitter at a Distance; yet when we come near them, the Scene alters, and we discover their Flaws and Imper-

perfections. — Admitting then this Plea, SERM.
and allowing it to extenuate the Blame of IX.
our Proceedings; yet this will by no
Means excuse us, much less justify our
Conduct. On the contrary, we ought, on
this very Account, to check our Desires,
contract our Views, and moderate our
Pursuits. Why should we go on, after
so many repeated Trials, and in Opposi-
tion to universal Experience, to expect
more Good from the Things of this
World, than they are capable of yielding?

But to proceed; as Mens Desires are
apt to stray in the foregoing Respect; so
even when they do fix on some determi-
nate Object, they are oftentimes still un-
settled; still may be said to wander, tho'
in a different Sense. When any particu-
lar Good gains their Hearts and Affections,
and almost engrosses them to itself; there
is yet Room for *the Wandering of the De-*
sire; tho' not in Quality, and in Kind, yet
in Quantity, and in Degree. When the
Object is thus pitched upon, and their In-
clinations are thoroughly fixed upon it;
then the Question is, how much of it
will content them: how far they are to
pursue it, and when and where to stop.
But alas! it often happens, that they

SERM. wander on to their Lives End, and their

IX. Desires and their Breath are stopped together. — How insatiable, for Instance, are Avarice and Ambition? What Bounds can be set to either, but those of Life itself? At their first setting out Men often propose indeed a limited Pursuit, and fix in their Minds a certain Point of Rest; where when they arrive, they intend to sit down and be satisfied. The ambitious Man lays his Scheme, marks out a Train of Exploits, and terminates his Views in some favourite Post of Honour: these being accomplished, he resolves to be quiet, and put an End to his Labours. The covetous Man pitches, in his own Imagination, upon such a Sum, or such an Estate; and makes no Doubt but, when he has obtained it, it will satisfy his Mind, and put a Period to his Cares and his Toils. Let us suppose them both to succeed; they shall both find themselves deceived by the Treachery of their Hearts, and *the Wandering of their Desires*. These Points being gained, and the first Scheme executed; they frame a Second, and then a Third; till at last they can set themselves no Bounds at all; but come to a Resolution, the one of rising as high as he

he can, and the other of getting as much SERM.
as is possible.—As these are common and IX.
well-known Cases, so it is evident that
there is no material Difference between
them and the former. It matters but lit-
tle, whether our Desires wander from one
Good to another ; or sticking to the same
Good, continue moving and mounting
from one Degree of it to another. In
either Case we lose the Peace and Tran-
quillity of our Minds ; and become rest-
less, discontented, and miserable, which
brings me to the

*Second Particular, namely the Vanity
and Vexation of Spirit* ascribed in my
Text to such a State of Mind.—Which
is manifest from hence, that it answers no
rational End, and really means nothing :
nothing at least that is worth any Man's
Time or Trouble. For what Good can
he propose from running round in such a
Circle of Vanity and Folly ? What Ad-
vantage from losing himself in such a fruit-
less Chace ? *Surely he walketh in a vain
Shew ; surely he is disquieted in vain.* When
a Man's Desires are boundless, his Labour
is endless ; they will set him a Task that
he can never go through, and cut him out
Work that he never can finish. The Sa-
tisfaction

SERM. tisfaction which he seeks, is always absent;

IX. and the Happiness which he aims at, ever
 at a Distance. He has perpetually many Things to do, and many Things to provide; and *that which is wanting cannot be numbered.* He is continually in Search of what he can never find; and the more Care he takes, the further he is from Contentment. A restless Mind, like a rolling Stone, gathers nothing but Mire and Dirt. Little or no Good will cleave to it; and it is sure to leave Peace and Quietness behind it. It confounds itself with the Variety of its Pursuits, and the Hurry of its Motions; and sometimes it is drawn different Ways, and distracted by opposite Inclinations. With such Persons the chief Point is, not what Account any Thing will turn to, or what Satisfaction it will afford; but what is to be designed and done next. One Desire immediately succeeds another, like Waves of the Sea, and keep the Mind in constant Agitation. If this be not Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, it is hard to say what is. What can be more vain than an unprofitable Course of Action? What more vexatious than an uninterrupted Series of troublesome Undertakings, and turbulent Pursuits?

But perhaps it will be objected, that SERM.
this is only exchanging one Pleasure for IX.
another. It may be urged, that different
Minds have different Enjoyments; and
that it may be as agreeable to one Man
to let his Desires and Inclinations wander,
as it is to another to have them at Rest.—
I answer, that this is confounding the End
and the Means, and supposing Men to
act for acting Sake. If all the Satisfaction
that we are capable of, consisted merely
in Action; it would signify nothing what
Course we took, provided we did but keep
moving. *Every Way* that a Man takes,
may, in some Measure *seem right in his*
own Eyes. He must like it, and be pleas-
ed with it, since it is his own Choice.
Nevertheless if it will not stand the Test
of Reason and Discretion, it cannot possibly
rise any higher than to some spurious and
unnatural Pleasure. Thus a sickly or a
vitiated Stomach may be in some Sense
gratified by changing its Food every Hour,
and longing for one Thing after another :
but will not the plainest and simplest Diet
afford much greater Pleasure to those that
have a true Appetite, and a good Digestion?
In like manner a weak and distempered
Mind tossed about and tormented by
various

SERM. various Desires, catches at every Thing ;

IX. but has very little Relish of any Thing, and digests nothing. Such Wanderings of Appetite are certain Signs of Disorder, and Symptoms of Disease. And if they could be supposed to prevail in a sound Mind, they would soon weaken it, and make it sickly. For in Truth they are contrary to all the Precepts of Wisdom, and all the Rules of Reason and good Sense.

Peace and Tranquillity of Mind are the Foundation of all true Happiness, and there can be no sincere Enjoyment without it. While our Desires are directed by our Understandings, and governed by our Reason; we are in a natural, delightful, and secure State. But if they break loose, and shake off their Subjection, they raise a violent Tumult in a Man's Breast, and fill his Mind with Riot and Confusion. Like the headstrong Populace in some successful Insurrection, they drive all before them; pull down all Order and all Authority; and carry the Man away captive whither they please.

This Wandering of Desire must needs be very troublesome and vexatious, not only as it deprives a Man of the Peace
and

and Quiet of his Mind, and brings him SERM.
 into a restless State; but as it exposes him IX.
 to continual Disappointments. It engages
 him in so many Pursuits, that unavoidably
 he must often fail, and fall short; and when
 ever this happens, he is sure to be mortifi-
 fied. When he cannot gain his End, he
 is disappointed; and when he does gain
 it, he is still disappointed, because he
 gains it to so little Purpose. For as soon
 as he has gained it, he neglects it, and
 lays it aside, to make Way for another.
 So that his Case is pretty much the same,
 whether he succeed or no; or to speak
 more properly, he never does or can meet
 with any real Success; because he is ne-
 ver contented, never satisfied. — Since
 then this is *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*,
 let us go on to consider in the

Third Place, that Temper of Mind, that
 Method of Life, which our Royal Author
 prefers and recommends in my Text, and
 which he means by *the Sight of the Eyes*.
 That is, as I before took Notice, a due
 Regard to those Blessings which Providence
 has put into our Hands; a just Sense of
 that Good which lies before us, and a
 quiet and thankful Enjoyment of what
 we possess. Instead of overlooking what
 we

SERM. we have, we ought carefully to consider

IX. why it was given us; that God may have
the Glory, and we the Comfort of it. It is hard to say whether it be greater Folly, or Ingratitude, to be always grasping at new Objects, and despising old ones. How can we ask of Heaven fresh Favours, and further Prosperity, while we are so insensible of what we have already received? If what we are possessed of be of no Value, we shall never in this World find any Thing that is. Nay put all external Things together, and they are worth nothing in Comparison of those Gifts which scarce any Man living wants. Every one enjoys Mercies, the least of which he would be sorry to exchange for all the Treasures and Kingdoms upon Earth.

The true Art of Life can never consist in the Abundance of Objects, or the Multiplicity of Desires; which may indeed keep^d a Man very busy, but will never make him happy. The Foundation of Happiness must not be laid without, but within; not Abroad, but at Home; not in outward Objects, but in the Mind itself. Without this, whatever we build upon it will never stand. We may toil and labour, and search about, to very little
Pur-

Purpose. Violent Motion will never cure SERM.
 either a feverish Body, or a feverish Mind; IX.
 on the contrary, it will in either Case ra-
 ther heighten and inflame the Distemper.
 A restless Spirit and an insatiable Disposition may wander on from Project to Project, from Undertaking to Undertaking; and be at last further from Happiness, than it was at first setting out.

The Truth is, we frame Expedients, and multiply Schemes, without rightly considering the End we aim at. Many intricate Attempts we engage in, many fruitless Inventions we follow; and scarce know all the while, what it is that we propose. Instead of being directed by *the Sight of our Eyes*, and the Light of our Understandings; we are frequently led astray by our wild Appetites, and our wandering Desires. They often carry us we know not whither, and seldom fail to leave us worse than they found us.

Both Reason and Revelation assure us, that *Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth*. But this Lesson, true and divine as it is, Ambition will not hear, nor Avarice understand. They measure Happiness, not by the Rule of Enjoyment, but by the Ex-

tent

SERM. tent of Acquisition. They take it for
 IX. granted, that if Wealth and Honour flow
 { in a pace, they cannot fail to bring Satisfaction along with them: never considering that this depends infinitely more on the State and Condition of the Mind, than any outward Advantages whatever. — If any Man had a Distemper in his Eyes, that threatened him with the Loss of his Sight; and instead of guarding against this Danger, should wholly employ himself in enlarging and beautifying his Prospects; would not every one pronounce that he acted most absurdly, and begun at the wrong End? And yet how does this Case differ from the other? Till we rectify our Minds, and regulate our Desires; *it is but lost Labour that we haste to rise up early, and late take Rest, and eat the Bread of Carefulness.* Whatever Success we may meet with; we shall be no nearer Happiness; and probably a good deal further off.

Agreeably to the Doctrine contained in my Text, it is therefore our Wisdom, our Duty, our Interest, to open our Eyes, and contract our Desires. Not to overlook the Goods and Blessings which we possess; but to keep them in our Sight, and in our
 Re-

Remembrance: To preserve a grateful SERM.
 Sense of them, and a just Esteem for them; IX.
 for many they are, and some of them not
 only great, but inestimable. Whatever
 our outward Circumstances may be, we
 may find just Cause, whenever we please,
 both for Thanksgiving and Rejoicing. Are
 all the Favours of Heaven, and the Boun-
 ties of Providence, to be disregarded; if
 we happen to fall short in one single Point?
 Is it nothing to us that we are in Posses-
 sion of our Health, our Limbs, and our
 Liberty? Is it a small Matter that we en-
 joy our Senses, our Memories, our Under-
 standings, firm and unbroken? Does it
 signify little that we wear the Image of
 the great Creator; that we are placed *lit-
 tle lower than the Angels, and crowned with
 Glory and Honour?* If none of these Things
 move us, yet can we be insensible of the
 Means of Grace, and the Hopes of a blef-
 sed Immortality? Of the Pardon of Sin,
 the Promise of a Resurrection, and the
 Prospect of everlasting Life?—As these
 are Blessings common to all Christians;
 so they are surely sufficient, if duly con-
 sidered, to banish every Discontent, and
 set our Minds at Ease. Whoever keeps
 them in View, and carefully reflects on
 VOL. I. N them,

SERM. them, will soon be convinced of the Truth

IX. in my Text; and acknowledge that *the*

Sight of the Eyes is better, and more comfortable, than the Wandering of the Desire.

But after all, it remains to be further observed, that we are not obliged nor required to suppress our natural Desires, and withstand every Inclination. Our wise Author is far from advising us to pluck them up by the Roots; which is neither possible, nor needful. But we may and ought to hinder them from running wild, and check them when they grow luxuriant. It is by no Means fitting to let them shoot up and spread; till they overshadow our Minds and darken our Understandings: Thereby making us overlook, or forget, much greater Blessings than they can ever produce.—Again, there are other Desires not properly natural, which may innocently be pursued within the Bounds of Sobriety and Moderation. Men may endeavour to improve their Conditions, and better their Fortunes; provided they do it fairly and honestly, and in such a Manner as is consistent with the Obligations of Religion. It is not every Desire, nor every Pursuit of external Goods that is disallowed. The Fault and the Folly is,

is, when they betray us into Anxiety, Impatience, and Restlessness; when they take up too many of our Thoughts, when they are unguided by Reason; and in a Word when they are neither to be satisfied, limited, nor stopped. A State of Mind that is full as contrary to our Ease, and our Interest, as it is to our Duty. There is neither Virtue, nor Profit, nor Sense in it. If an insatiable Disposition be a Vice, it is also a Curse; and perhaps one of the worst, and heaviest, that any Man can fall into. It is what the wise Man calls *a fore Travel, an evil Disease*. And what makes this *Disease* still more *evil*, is, that too often it becomes incurable. Whoever are smitten with it, it accompanies them for the most Part through every Stage of Life; gathers Strength in old Age, and brings down their *grey Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave*.

Upon the Whole, there seems to be an absolute Necessity either of contracting our Desires, or giving them a new Turn. As to the former, it greatly contributes to the Tranquillity of our Minds; as it makes us less dependent on outward Objects, and less obnoxious to the Changes and Chances of Life. If it lessen the Sphere of our

SERM. Happiness, and bring it into a narrower

IX. Compass; yet it strengthens and secures it, and makes it more our own. Contentment is *a Pearl of great Price*; and whoever procures it at the Expence of ten thousand Desires, makes a wise and a happy Purchase. We shall more easily obtain it, if we consider, that no other than moderate Enjoyments are to be expected in this Life. That this is not our Home, not our Place of Abode; but a State of Pilgrimage: And that therefore we ought to be satisfied with tolerable Accommodations. In short, that it is contrary to Nature, and the Appointments of Providence, to propose perfect Happiness in a Place that was never designed for it.

But Secondly and Lastly; there is a Way of indulging our Desires, even in their utmost Extent, without Danger, and without Inconvenience; and that is by directing them upwards: By transforming them from Things below, to Things above. Here they may securely take their full Range; and not only find Objects equal to them, but infinitely superior to the largest of them: Such as will exalt them to the highest Pitch, and yet fully satisfy them. We are allowed to covet, as
much

much as we please, the Treasures of Heaven; and ardently to wish for the Glories of Immortality. Such Desires as these will be so far from disquieting and perplexing our Minds; that they will fill them with Consolation, and Joy unspeakable. Here then let us fix our Aims; hither direct our Ambition. We shall be sure to find neither Vanity nor Vexation in such a Pursuit. If we *set our Affections on Things above*, and make due Preparation for them; if we render ourselves meet Partakers of so divine an Inheritance; we shall not fail to receive a *Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away*, but endureth for ever.



S E R M O N X.

The Wisdom of regarding Coun-
sel, and the Folly of rejecting it.

PROV. XII. 15.

*The Way of a Fool is right in his own
Eyes : But he that bearkeneth unto Coun-
sel, is wise.*

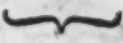
HOWEVER such a Concession SERM.
X.
may expose us to the severe Im-
putation in my Text, it must
be owned, for it cannot be
disowned, that the Generality of Man-
kind are very partial to their own Schemes,
and immoderately addicted to their own
Ways of thinking and acting. However
their Judgments be formed ; whether de-
liberately, or rashly ; however their Mea-
sures be concerted ; whether wisely or
N 4 weakly ;

SERM. weakly ; they resolutely adhere to them,

X. and persist in them at all Adventures.

Every Man's Way is, and must be, in some Degree, acceptable to himself ; otherwise he would never have chosen it. But nevertheless whoever is wise, will be apt to suspect and be diffident of himself ; and upon that Account be willing to *bearken unto Counsel* : Whereas the foolish Man being, in Proportion to his Folly, full of himself, and swallowed up in Conceit, will seldom take any Counsel but his own ; and for that very Reason because it is his own. Hence it often happens, that in Opposition to all the Reasons and Remonstrances that can be offered him, he continues immoveable in his Choice, and thereby exposes himself to many Inconveniencies that might easily have been avoided. Thus his Interest falls a Sacrifice to his Vanity, and he never gains Wisdom till he has dearly paid for it. Nothing will convince him that he needs other Mens Counsel, till he finds himself bewildered in his own Devices.

In treating of this Subject, I shall *first* consider it in general, and *secondly* with a particular Regard to our main Concern. Considering it in general ; the Folly of re-
jecting

jecting Counsel, and the Wisdom of heark-SERM.
ening to it, may evidently be made ap-X.
pear on the following Grounds. 

First, The Mind of Man is not only finite, and limited; but of a short Extent, and a narrow Comprehension. When he has improved it as much as he can, which is seldom the Case; still his Views will be very imperfect, and his Knowledge inconsiderable. When he has sought and searched as far as he is able, innumerable Things will escape him; and he is sure to find himself frequently at a loss. Should we suppose all human Knowledge put together; comparatively speaking, it would amount to very little. Like a great Number of Rivulets united in one Stream, it would bear no Proportion to the vast and boundless Ocean of Truth. How small a Pittance then must that be, which falls, or can fall, to any particular Person's Share? Whatever Pains he has taken, whatever Inquiries he has made, in numberless Cases and Respects he finds himself in the dark; very often puzzled and perplexed, and wanting Help on almost every Occasion. Like a Traveller in a strange Road, he must either take Directions, or frequently lose his Way, and wander

SERM. wander he knows not whither.—Nothing

X. is more absurd than to imagine that any

Man can be too wise to learn, or too knowing to need Instruction. Nay whoever entertains such a Thought in respect of himself, does thereby demonstrate his own Folly, and prove himself egregiously ignorant. And this holds equally true in Points of Speculation, and Matters of Practice. As every Man wants a Communication of Light for the Improvement of his Conceptions, so he no less needs Counsel for the Direction of his Actions. Various Cases are continually occurring, many Exigencies must he meet with in Life, wherein he must either take Advice, or be a great Sufferer. Nor is it any Objection against the Wisdom of Providence, that Men are not always able to direct themselves in the Execution of those Affairs, and the Discharge of those Duties which are incumbent on them. On the contrary, it was most wisely ordained, that in this and many other Instances, they should mutually depend on each others Assistance. As they were intended for Society, such a Dependence was requisite to bind and cement it: To join their Heads and Hearts, and enable them more suc-

“ successfully to promote the great Ends of SERM.
Life. But to return, since all Mens Minds X.
are thus defective, and their Knowledge
short and scanty; since on many Occa-
sions they are unable to direct themselves,
or remove those Difficulties in which they
are often engaged; it is manifestly great
Folly to put intire Confidence in their own
Judgments, and *lean solely on their own*
Understandings. On the other Hand to
bearken unto Counsel is a Disparagement to
no Man; so far from it, that it is an In-
dication of Wisdom, and the likeliest Way
to increase it. It is a natural Remedy,
and a proper Supply, for human Imper-
fection; a safe and profitable Expedient:
And the wisest Men are ever most willing
to make use of it. But,

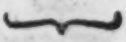
Secondly, The Reasonableness of regard-
ing Counsel, and the Folly of despising it,
will more evidently appear, if we consider
the Diversity of Mens Talents and Op-
portunities. Let us suppose a Man so far
indulging his Vanity, as to conclude him-
self possessed of as much Knowledge, and
as large Abilities, as any Person whatever.
And to shorten the Dispute, let this vain
Conclusion, this high Demand be granted
him: Still it will be nothing to the Pur-
pose;

SERM. pose; nor will it justify that Self-Confidence, and Neglect of Counsel, which are
 X. condemned in my Text. In some Points, some Parts of Knowledge, he would nevertheless be excelled; admitting, in the Main, that Equality of Understanding which he pretends to. For whatever Mens Capacities may be, most certain it is that there is great Difference and Variety among them; I mean not in Degree, but in Kind. Their Talents, even when equally valuable and good, yet point different Ways, and are suited to different Objects and Employments. One Man's natural Genius lies one Way, and another's another. And supposing them followed and cultivated alike, the Consequence must be, that each of them must excel and be superior to the other in that Branch of Skill for which Nature has fitted him. What we read of supernatural Gifts, the same holds true of natural Powers; that *they are divided to every Man severally* as the Donor pleases: And that purposely, without Question, to answer better the various Uses and Occasions of Life. Supposing then any Man's Capacity as good, in its Kind, as he imagines it; yet surely he must allow that other
 Men

Men may have equal Talents and Abilities of other Kinds. From whence it follows, that if not in all, yet in many Cases, they must be able to judge better, and give better Directions, than he can pretend to. No Man had ever such an universal Genius as to excel in every thing. And if any one can arrive at such an extravagant Degree of Vanity, as to fancy such a Thing of himself, all that can be concluded from it is, that however he may flatter himself, he wants Counsel more than any Man living. — But further, as Mens Talents are various, so their Opportunities of Improvement and Experience are very different: Not only such Opportunities as arise from Mens respective Professions, wherein they are doubtless most capable of judging, and most fit to be consulted; but such as they accidentally meet with in the several Paths and Pursuits of Life. Every Man of Thought and Application must gain Experience in those Matters wherein he has been conversant; and the more Experience he has, the fitter he must ordinarily be to direct those that want it. And want it every Man must in many Things. As no Man has an universal Understanding, so no
Man

SERM. Man has, or can have, universal Experience.

X. Both the one and the other are unavoidably limited to a few Particulars. The Narrowness of our Minds, and the Shortness of our Lives, will seldom admit of any thing further. As then almost every Man may be capable of giving Advice in some Points or other; so there is no Man who is not often obliged to receive it, or to suffer through the Want of it. Hence it comes to pass, that the lowest Part of Mankind have been sometimes qualified to inform the highest; that in some Cases Philosophers have been instructed by illiterate Rusticks, and even Princes by Peasants. Nor have the greatest Men, on proper Occasions, disdained to hear and follow the Advice of the least. And indeed it is an Argument of true Greatness of Mind, as well as good Sense and Judgment, so to do. For most certain it is, that the Knowledge of the wisest Men may be and is often indebted to the Experience of those who know the least. And if any Man is so vain and so weak as to slight the Judgment, and contemn the Counsel of other Men; if no *Way is right in his Eyes but his own*; he may enjoy his own Esteem and good Opinion as he can;

but the wiser Part of Mankind will not SERM.
fail to brand him as *Solomon* does in my X.
Text. Again. 

Thirdly, The Wisdom of hearkening unto Counsel, and the Folly of despising it, are further manifest from the following Consideration. Let Mens Abilities be never so great, and their Knowledge never so extensive; still they ought not, and without great Danger and Inconvenience cannot, trust wholly and intirely to themselves. For those Abilities and that Knowledge easily may be, and often are, rendered useless by the Prejudices and Prepossessions of Mens own Minds. The best Understandings are frequently biased, not to say blinded, by favourite Opinions and darling Inclinations. Nothing is more common than for Mens Appetites and Affections to bribe their Judgments, and seduce them into erroneous and absurd Ways of thinking and acting. They are often entangled and set fast, not through the Want of Light and Knowledge, not through any Defect of their Heads, but through the Deceitfulness of their Hearts. In many Cases where they could easily direct other Men, they suffer themselves to be catched; and
are

SERM. are driven into the Snare by Strength of

X. Inclination, or the Force of Habit. The
plainest Points are often blundered in the
Decision; the weakest Designs undertaken,
and the silliest Actions done, by Men of
superior Understanding and distinguished
Capacity. If it be inquired how this comes
to pass, the Answer is, that their Judg-
ments are clouded by some strong Preju-
dice, or corrupted by some powerful Af-
fection; insomuch that they can neither
hear nor see any thing but what makes
for one Side of the Question. And though
the Evidence on the other Side be much
stronger, and would appear so to them if
they would let it; yet some way or other
it is effectually stifled, and stands for no-
thing. In such a Case as this what avail
any Man's Abilities? What signifies his
Capacity, while he thus plays Tricks with
his Faculties, and will not use them fairly
and honestly? Is it not plain that he
wants Counsel and Admonition as much
as if he were never so ignorant: And in-
deed he really is, on such Occasions, as
ignorant as a Man can be; only with this
Difference, that his Ignorance is not in-
voluntary, but in a great Measure wilful;
not his Misfortune, but his Crime. Let
Mens

Mens Eyes or Understandings be ever so good, it is at any Time in their Power to make both useless by shutting them up against the Light. While a Man is resolved to wink, he must and will be as much in the Dark as those that want Sight.—But this acquired Darkneſs, this voluntary Incapacity, as well as the want of Counſel thereby occaſioned, no where appear more frequently, or more remarkably, than in the Tranſaction of our ſpiritual Concerns, and what relates to the Diſcharge of our Duty : Which is the

Second Point that I propoſed to conſider. Here then the Power of Prejudice, and the Bias of Inclination, ſhew themſelves in the higheſt Degree. Though we want no Knowledge, though our Underſtandings be never ſo well informed, we can find Ways and Means to render it ineffectual. We can, and too often do, withſtand the cleareſt Evidence, and ſhut our Eyes againſt the plaineſt Reaſons in the World. And if our Ears be ſhut too; if we will not *bearken unto Counſel*, nor ſuffer ourſelves to be adviſed; it is eaſy to ſee what is like to be the Conſequence.—Whenever we ſeriously reflect on it, we cannot but be aſtoniſhed to think what

SERM. Pains Men take, and what Arts they use,
X. to delude themselves, and impose upon
their own Judgments; and that in Affairs
of the utmost Consequence. *The Way of
a Man*, says our Royal Author, *is right in
his own Eyes, though the End thereof be the
Ways of Death*. When we have wander-
ed out of the Road, and almost lost our-
selves among Pits and Precipices; we
can make ourselves believe that we have
continued all the while in the High-way
to Truth and Happiness. So strong is
this Self-delusion, that it hides from us
whatever we have no Mind to see; and in
the midst of Guilt, and Danger, soothes us
into an Opinion of Innocence and Securi-
ty.—Very often we lay aside all Thoughts
of our Duty, and keep it quite out of our
Minds: And when we do think of it, we
make a shift to think just what we have a
mind. In respect of what is past, we place
our Conduct in the best Light, and repre-
sent our Actions in the fairest Colours.
Our Judgments are always favourable, and
sometimes directly false; and as much as
possible we teach our very Consciences to
flatter. We speak *Peace* to ourselves,
when there is *no Peace*; and conclude
ourselves in Safety, when we are on the
very

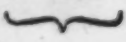
very Brink of Ruin. In respect of Fu-SERM.
turity, whatever may be dreadful or disa- X.
greeable, is carefully covered, and kept
out of Sight. On the contrary, we build
fair Hopes, and cut out fine Prospects, in
our own Imaginations; and what is want-
ing in Truth and Probability, is made up
with Fallacy and Fiction. In short, such
is the *Deceitfulness of Sin*, and so weakly
are we guarded against its Frauds; that no-
thing can be more foolish, nothing more
fatal, than trusting wholly to ourselves,
and rejecting the Benefit of wise Counsel
and faithful Admonition.—If we refused
other Mens Advice merely in order to fol-
low the Dictates of our Reason; though
this in many Cases would still be Folly,
yet it would be moderate Folly in Compa-
rison of what we are often guilty of. We
not only neglect other Mens Understand-
ings, but frequently our own. Instead of
listening to our Reason, as we pretend;
we are many times only consulting our
Inclinations, and taking Counsel of our
Lusts and Appetites. And without Doubt
miserable Counsellors they are. What
should we think of that Man, who re-
nouncing the Protection of Law and Go-

SERM. vernment, should commit himself to the

X. Custody of wild Creatures, and Beasts of

Prey? Such and more foolish is his Conduct, who abandoning his Reason, gives himself up to the Guidance of his Lusts and Passions. For in Truth the Passions of Men, when they have once broken loose from the Restraints of Reason and Religion, and have gotten their full Liberty, are more unruly and more mischievous than any brutal Instincts whatever. So great Need have we of the Direction of our Reason and Understanding; and indeed of all the Reason that we can meet with either at Home or Abroad. We should carefully *encline our Ear unto Wisdom*, wherever it is to be found. We should *seek her as Silver*, according to our wise Author's Advice, *and search for her, as for hid Treasures. She is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her. Then shall he walk in his Way safely, and his Foot shall not stumble.*

But it is further to be observed that as Mens Attachment to their own Ways, and their Aversion to Counsel, are frequently owing to the Prejudices and Partialities of Self-

Self-Love, or the Delusions of sinful Lusts; SERM.
so they are often occasioned by Thought- X.
lessness, Negligence, and Inconsideration. 

However apt they may be to mistake or misrepresent their Duty, most certain it is that they are still more prone to forget it, as well as those important Truths that are connected with it. Though they very well know what Obligations they are under, and sufficiently understand where their true Interest lies; yet while these Things are unconsidered and unthought of, it is much the same as if they were unknown. If Men will not take Care to keep them in Mind, but rather endeavour to keep them out; how can it be expected that they should have any Influence, or take any Effect? Supposing therefore that they did not want Instruction and Counsel, yet certainly they stand in great Need of faithful Monitors; to bring these neglected Truths to their Remembrance; to open their Eyes, and recall their Thoughts; and, if possible, to fix them on those weighty Concerns which they are so apt and so inclinable to forget. To admonish and *exhort* them *daily*, lest they be *hardened*, or stupified, *through the*

SERM. *Deceitfulness of Sin.* Such Help as this is

X. universally wanted; nor can it, without
extreme Folly and desperate Obstinacy, be rejected.

Especially if it be considered, how much depends on the Care we take of our Conduct, and the Discharge of our Duty. This is a Matter not only of great Moment, but really of infinite Consequence. When we fail of Success in our temporal Affairs, at most we can only sustain a temporal Damage, which perhaps may be repaired; and if it cannot, yet it may be borne with Patience, and even Contentment. For most of the Things of this World are of such a Nature, that we may either do with them, or without them. And moreover this Life itself is but a Span, and will soon be ended. But if we finally miscarry in our spiritual Concerns; the Loss is irreparable, unspeakable, and eternal. If we forfeit the Favour of God, and that great and endless Happiness which belongs to it; what can there be left to relieve or comfort us. If we lose that mighty Good, that inestimable Blessing; all our Hopes are struck dead at once, and our Expectations cut off for ever; we are utterly ruined

ed beyond the Reach of Remedy; be-
yond the Help of Time, and all the Pow-
ers of Patience.—Can we then be too
careful, too solicitous about this impor-
tant Affair, this everlasting Concern? Can
we reject any Means, or neglect any Op-
portunities of securing it? Ought we not
rather to accept willingly, and even seek
diligently whatever may assist us therein,
or contribute to our Success? Does not
that Counsel deserve to be hearkened to,
which warns us to *flee from the Wrath to*
come, and not to *neglect so great, so eternal*
a Salvation? Which is meant to with-
draw our Affections from this vain transi-
tory World, and fix them on the Joys
and Glories of a blessed Immortality? In
short, if there be any Wisdom in refusing
and despising Admonitions of this Nature;
it will be impossible to prove that there is
any such Thing as Folly, or even to un-
derstand what it means.

But after all; however lightly we may
esteem the Helps and Directions of *Hu-*
man Wisdom, yet surely the highest Re-
gard and Reverence are due to *Divine*.
Whatever we may think of the Advices
of mere Men; yet this can be no Reason

SERM. for neglecting those that are *inspired*? If

X. we will not mind fallible Counsellors;

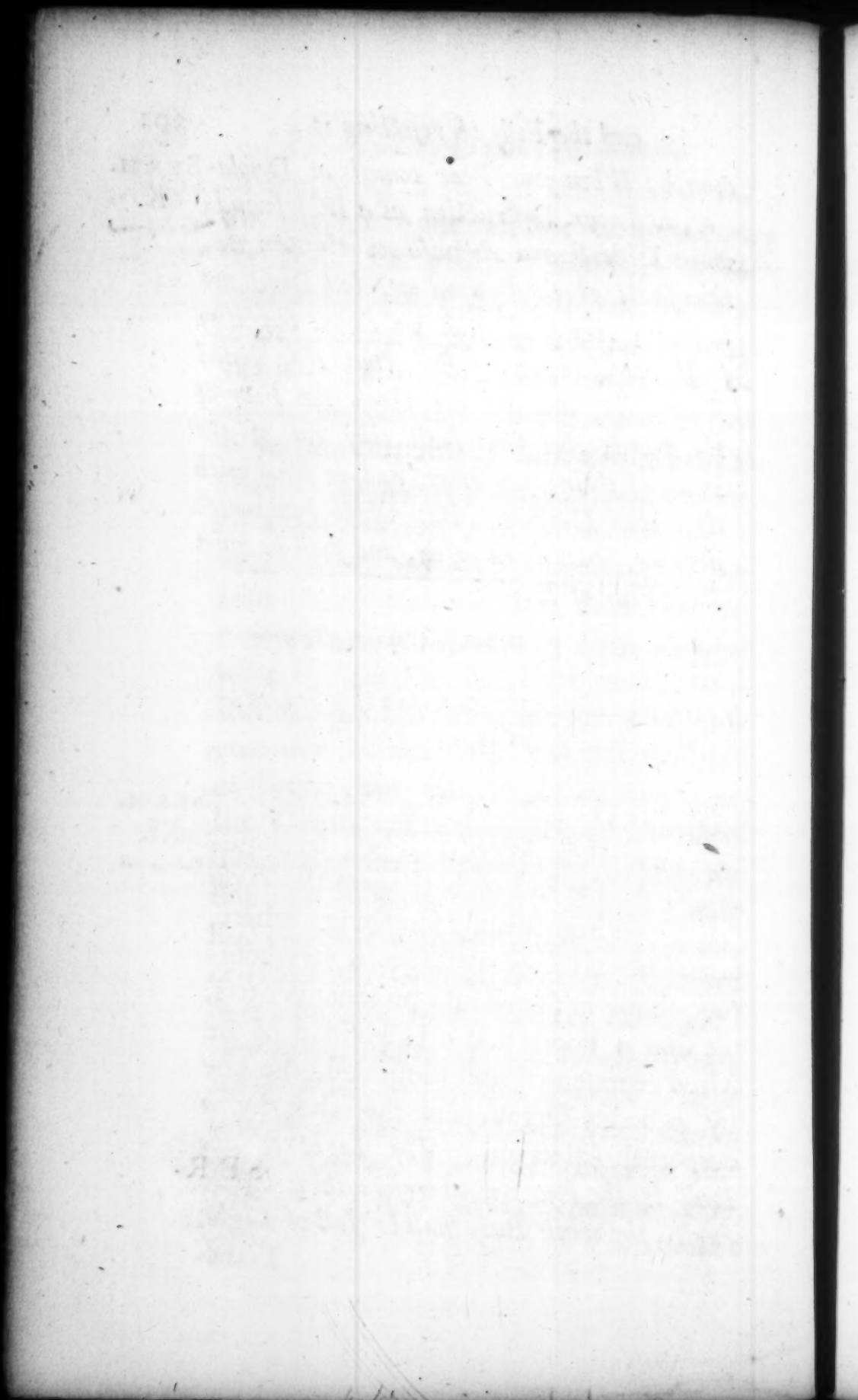
yet shall we give no Heed to *Prophets* and *Apostles*? Shall we not hearken to the *Son of God*, the Saviour of the World; who came into it on purpose to instruct and direct us, and guide us in the Way to everlasting Salvation? Lastly, Shall we not attend, devoutly and diligently attend, to the Counsels of our *Heavenly Father*, and the Admonitions of the most High? Can we have more Regard to what is *right in our own Eyes*, than to what is right in His? Dare we not trust Omniscience? Is it possible for us to imagine that infinite Wisdom cannot direct us better than we can do ourselves? — But I shall not expostulate any further. The Thing itself speaks so plain, that nothing can make it plainer. I shall therefore conclude with the Words of Wisdom, or rather the God of Wisdom, delivered to us by our royal Author. *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; But ye have set at nought my Counsel, and despised all my Reproof: I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh;*

and the Folly of rejecting it.

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*cometh : When your Fear cometh as Desola-SERM.
tion, and your Destruction as a Whirlwind ; X.
when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you, }
then shall they call upon me, but I will not
answer ; they shall seek me early, but they
shall not find me. For that they hated
Knowledge, and did not choose the Fear of
the Lord ; therefore shall they eat of the
Fruit of their own Way, and be filled with
their own Devices. But who so hearkeneth
unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet
from Fear of Evil.*

SER-





S E R M O N XI.

The Causes and Consequences of
intellectual Darkness.

MATTH. VI. Part of the 23d Verse.

*If therefore the Light that is in thee be Dark-
ness, how great is that Darkness?*

TO discover the Meaning of ^{SERM.} these Words, it will be requi- ^{XI.} site to look back upon the Verse immediately foregoing; where, according to a Figure of Speech very common both in sacred and profane Writers, we find a Power and a Disposition of the Mind represented and illustrated, the one by a bodily Organ, and the other by a corporeal Affection. *The Light of the Body is the Eye; if therefore thine Eye be single, thy whole Body shall be full of Light.*
Trans-

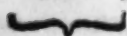
SERM. Transferring this to the Mind, the Question will be what we are to understand by the Character of *Singleness* here recommended : For that the Eye of the Mind denotes its Faculty of Perception and Judgment, is needless to be observed or mentioned. — The usual Signification of the Word *single* in the Original, applied to the Mind, is that of Liberality and Beneficence. And accordingly this Sense of it seems to receive Confirmation from the Context ; where we find inculcated a Disregard of temporal Treasures, and a perpetual Preference of such as are eternal. — But if we turn to the parallel Passage in *St. Luke, Chap. xi. ver. 34, &c.* we find a different Context, and that the Expression is used on a different Occasion : For there the Application confronts the Case of the unbelieving *Jews*, whose Judgments were perverted by their corrupt Affections, and gross Prejudices. — And indeed the primary, direct, and most natural Signification of a *single Eye*, in relation to the Mind, seems to be that Purity, Integrity, and Simplicity of Judgment, which consists in being directed and governed solely by Evidence, without Regard had to any other Consideration. The Sight of the Mind is then

then properly fingle and undivided, when SERM.
in the View of any Cafe, or the Exami- XI.
nation of any Question, it looks at no-
thing but Evidence, and judges accord-
ingly; without being influenced by any
other Regards or Motives whatever.—

On the contrary, an *Evil Eye*, is an Eye
diftempered, diftorted, and depraved;
and when fpoken of the Mind, denotes
an Underftanding clouded with Prejudices,
and a Judgment difturbed and difordered
by finifter Views, and irregular Influen-
ces.—Thefe Explications being premifed,
the Meaning of my Text becomes plain
and obvious. If Reason or Underftanding,
which is the Eye of the Mind, and the
Light of the Soul, be vitiated by Prejudice,
and blinded by Partiality; the Confequence
is not only Darknefs inftead of Light, but
Darknefs to a high Degree; fuch as fills
the Mind with Errors and Abfurdities, Dif-
order and Confufion. *If the Light which
is in thee be Darknefs, how great is that
Darknefs?*—In treating on which Words,
I fhall endeavour to fhew more particularly,

First, How, and by what Means, the
Mind of Man is thus darkened and
depraved. And

Secondly,



Secondly, The Degree and Extent of this Mischief, implied in the Interrogation, how great is that Darknes?

First, I am to shew, how, and by what Means, the Mind of Man is thus darkened and depraved.——It has already been observed, that the general Causes of this Mischief, are Prejudice, Partiality, and Prepossession. But this is not enough. The Grounds and Occasions of Mens Prejudices should be more distinctly laid open. They are indeed very numerous, as well as various; and therefore I shall not pretend to consider them all. But, if I mistake not, the principal of them are reducible under the following Heads, viz. Constitution, Custom, Authority, Singularity, Affection, Interest. These seem to be the chief Sources of Prejudice, and the main Occasions of partial and corrupt Judgment. It may not therefore be improper to inquire briefly into them, and examine them in their Order.

1. I observe that Mens Judgments are apt to be influenced by their respective *Constitutions*. So intimate is the Union between Soul and Body, that the Operations of the Former in many Respects depend on

on the Latter : Not only as to its accidental State, but its original Frame and Temperature. Differences of Constitution remarkably affect the Understanding, unless great Care be taken to prevent it : Diversifying Mens Ways of thinking and judging, and producing oftentimes correspondent Sentiments. — Thus, for Instance, a cool, phlegmatic Habit naturally disposes Men to be diffident and timorous in their Decisions ; to diminish all Evidence, suspect all Arguments, and represent them to Disadvantage. On the other Hand, a sanguine Constitution frequently occasions rash Opinions, and presumptuous Conclusions ; makes Men impatient of Attention, and by Consequence precipitates their Judgments. A copious Flow of Spirits is apt to magnify Evidence, and sometimes stands in stead of it ; makes Men take Things for granted without Proof ; and when Proof is offered, to admit of it though immature and insufficient. The Process of the Mind being thus hurried, and Examination flabbered, it easily takes up crude Determinations, and groundless Opinions. — This Inconvenience is much aggravated, where the Temperament happens to be choleric as well as sanguine. For Anger,

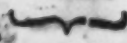
SERM.
XI.

SERM. in Proportion to the Degree wherein it
XI. prevails, not only disturbs, but darkens the
Mind ; not only obstructs the intellectual
Powers, but frequently confounds them.
As well might a Man see Objects distinctly
in a Hurricane, as perceive clearly, and
judge accurately, in a Storm of Passion.
In this Case Men are usually so far from at-
tending to Evidence, that they tread it un-
der their Feet ; so far from using their
Understandings in a regular Way, that
for the present, Reason itself appears im-
pertinent, and Truth contemptible. — I
shall only add, that though these consti-
tutional Tendencies are really natural, yet
the Mischiefs thence arising are solely
chargeable on ourselves. They cannot
lead us into Error, if we guard and govern
as we may (do), and as we ought (to do). If
indeed we give the Rein to our Passions,
no wonder if they run away with us. No
Man is *born* a Slave to his Constitution ;
and whoever *makes* himself such, the
Blame undoubtedly lies at his own Door.
He may act wisely, and judge honestly,
if he be careful and circumspect, and make
use of those means which God has put in-
to his Power. And considering the Helps
afforded him, and that this Life is a State
of

of Trial and Diſcipline, there can be no SERM.
juſt Cauſe of Complaint. XI.

A *ſecond* Source of Error is *Cuſtom*, a Principle that is well known to have great Force in warping Mens Minds, and fixing a Bias on their Underſtandings. When any Set of Opinions, Maxims, or Concluſions, have by long Poſſeſſion, become familiar to the Mind, and taken Root in it; they are ſeldom removed without Violence and great Difficulty. We are apt to conſider and cheriſh them as old Acquaintance, and to treat them accordingly with Tenderneſs and Reſpect. And whatever is advanced in Oppoſition thereto, though perhaps an evident Truth, is commonly rejected without Examination. Hence many Abſurdities plead a kind of Preſcription; and old Errors are fondly preferred to new Truths. — This is more remarkably the Caſe, in reſpect of ſuch Opinions and Sentiments as are imbibed early, and taught juſt in our Childhood; as making then a deeper and more durable Impreſſion. And hence it is that the Prejudices of Education are ſo hardly and ſo ſeldom conquered; never indeed without great Attention, ſtrong Reſolution, and a vigorous Effort of Mind. It is almoſt needleſs to

SERM. observe what powerful Obstacles these are
XI. to the Culture of the Understanding ; as
being a Matter of great and general Complaint. The Seeds of sound Knowledge and Instruction are sensibly choaked by them, in Proportion to their Number and Growth ; and till the Mind be carefully weeded, it seldom or never produces any valuable Fruit. By these Prejudices all kinds of Truth are obstructed ; and their mischievous Influence extends both to the Precepts of Philosophy, and the Principles of Religion, as well as to the Maxims of common Life : None of which can be fairly examined, or seen in a true Light, till those prevailing Prejudices be in a great Measure subdued. — Whatever Points come before us, instead of considering them as they are in themselves, and searching for Evidence alone with Singleness and Simplicity of Mind ; our usual Method is to compare them with such old Notions and received Opinions as are lying by us. If they agree with these, well and good ; if they disagree, we suspect them immediately, and perhaps scarce think them worth our Attention. And indeed it must be confessed, that no one Truth can be repugnant to any other Truth. But our great Misfortune,

Misfortune, or rather our great Fault is, SERM.
that whatever we have taken into our XI.
Minds, and kept there for ſome Time; 
we are apt to take it for granted muſt be
a Stock of neat Truth, without the leaſt
Mixture of Error. The Conſequence of
which is, that whatever ſquares not there-
with, we unavoidably look upon as erro-
neous and abſurd. And many of our
fixed Notions being mere Prejudices, it
naturally comes to paſs, that while few
Truths gain Admittance, Errors increaſe
and multiply continually. Nor can it be
otherwiſe, while we meaſure thus by a
faſe and deceitful Rule; and inſtead of be-
ing guided by Evidence, are governed by
Cuſtom. — This then is manifeſtly one
Cause, and that a very powerful one, of the
miſchievous Effects ſpoken of in my Text:
Foraſmuch as it viſibly tends, and notori-
ouſly contributes, to darken Mens Minds,
and deprave their Judgments.

3. Another, nearly allied to this, is
Authority. That is, in Effect, an undue
Deference and Attachment to great Names
and venerable Characters, (conſidered
merely as ſuch.) Inſtead of inquiring after
Evidence, and examining for themſelves
the Merits of any Cauſe, Men are ex-

SERM. exceedingly prone to take Things upon Trust;

XI. to follow blindly the Sentiments of their
 ~~~~~ Superiors, or the Principles of their Ancestors. The Argument, or rather Apology, of the unbelieving *Jews*, for rejecting our Saviour, and disowning his Mission, was intirely founded hereon. *Have any*, say they, *of the Rulers or Pharisees believed on him?* On this Account they thought it needless to examine his Credentials, or search for Evidence. It was sufficient for them, that he met with Opposition from those who, it seems, guided their Judgments, and governed their Consciences. And yet the very Men, in whom they thus confided, were so far from being impartial and sincere in their Determinations, that they were intirely under the Direction of their own Prejudices and Passions. And thus *the Blind led the Blind*, and the Love of Darkness generally prevailed. — Great Pity it is, that such an Example as this should ever have been followed by Christians. But alas! this has been too often the Case. Though Christianity utterly discountenances, and expresly condemns, implicit Faith, and a blind Submission to Authority; yet very many of its Professors have been unaccountably drawn into it, to  
 the

the Dishonour of their Religion, and even SERM.  
the Disgrace of human Understanding. XI.

Hence they have been involved in a thick  
Mist of Ignorance, and sat in Darknefs  
from Age to Age. ~~It~~ It is moreover very  
observable, what Respect and Reverence  
Men generally pay to their Forefathers;  
though it be at the Expence of Reason  
and Religion: I mean in adhering strict-  
ly to their Principles and Persuasions,  
whatever they be. A Practice familiar  
to all Sects and Parties, to all Distinctions  
and Denominations. Whatever Opinions  
our Ancesters maintained; whatever Re-  
ligion, or Communion, they embraced;  
'tis a Hundred to one that we embrace and  
persist in the same. We seem indeed to  
look upon them as part of our Inheritance,  
and to think ourselves bound to transmit  
them unaltered and untouched to those that  
come after us. There are indeed Instances  
to the contrary; but those Instances are so  
rare, as to be matter of Surprise and Won-  
der, whenever they happen. Most certain  
it is, that we should never change with-  
out good Grounds; much less for changing  
Sake. But nevertheless, if we can give  
no better Reason for our being Christians,  
or Protestants, or Members of any



SERM. particular Communion, than that our  
 XI. Fathers were so before us; our Religion is doubtless poorly founded. The very same Reason may be given by Papists, Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans: And if it be a bad Reason in them, as it certainly is; it can never be a good one in us. — But however absurd it may and must appear, whenever we consider it, the Fact is visible and notorious. Instead of searching diligently for the right Way, our Method is to proceed in a beaten Track. Instead of keeping the *Eye* of our Minds clear and *single*; we are often content to have it shut, and to follow our Leaders hoodwinked. It is easy to discover, how unchristian and unmanly such a Practice is; and how naturally it tends both to the Corruption of Religion, and the Depravation of Reason. A blind Adherence to Authority is so far from being consistent with either of them, that it is destructive of both. For both of them essentially require, that Men consider and judge for themselves. And when they have *tried* and *proved Things* as well as they are able; then to choose and *hold fast that which is good*. — Authority then not only perverts Mens Judgments; but as far as it reaches, renders them

them ufelefs. It not only darkens the SERM.  
Mind, but tends to perpetuate that Dark- XI.  
nefs. For what Occasion have Men for  
Light, or what Inducement to defire it,  
while they propofe nothing but to follow  
blindfold thofe that go before them? By  
judging for themfelves, and according to  
Evidence, Men greatly improve their  
Minds, and ftrengthen their Faculties;  
promote Truth, preferve Liberty; but a  
fervile Refignation to Authority is void of  
all Merit, and fruitful of all Mifchief. It  
cramps Mens Talents, difables their Un-  
derftandings, and in the Room of a rational  
Affent, introduces a blind Faith, and intel-  
lectual Stupidity. In fhort, it directly tends  
to the Promotion and Eftablifhment of Ig-  
norance, Darknefs, Slavery, and Super-  
ftition.—But while we are guarding againft  
this Evil, we muft not overlook the oppo-  
fite Extreme. For fuch is

4. The next Principle that I propofed  
to confider; I mean a vain Affectation of  
*Singularity*, which is likewise an Enemy to  
found Judgment, and another great Ob-  
ftruction to Light and Truth. If many  
Men are too prone and eafy to be *led*; o-  
thers are as willing and defirous to *lead*;  
as aiming oftentimes not fo much at Truth,

SERM. as Glory and Distinction. While the one  
 XI. are too tenacious of beaten Roads, and like  
 ~~~~~ to follow the Multitude; the other search  
 for new Ways, and industriously strike out
 into By-Paths of their own. They look
 upon it as a Mark of a vulgar Understanding
 to join in Sentiment, and concur in
 Judgment, with the Generality of Man-
 kind and accordingly are apt to treat all
 popular Opinions, and common Ways of
 thinking, with Contempt and Disdain.—
 But where is the Wisdom of such a Pro-
 ceeding? Why should any Man wish to
 distinguish himself at the Expence of
 Reason and Truth? Is not this a mere Pre-
 judice as well as the former? If Autho-
 rity shuts Mens Eyes, will not Vanity
 make them see double? In the one Case,
 they make little or no Use of their Facul-
 ties; in the other, they abuse and pervert
 them. (However, Ignorance and Darkness
 is the natural Effect of both.)—If we
 would really come to the Knowledge of
 the Truth, we must look at Evidence,
 and nothing but Evidence. On this alone
 the Eye is to be fixed. It is nothing to
 the Purpose to inquire or consider, how
 many are for such a Point, or how many
 are against it. For the Concurrence of
 Numbers

Numbers is neither a Proof, nor a Dis-^{SERM,}
proof. If it will not paſs, as indeed it ^{XI.}
ought not, for an Argument of Truth; 
certainly it ought not to paſs for an Argu-
ment of Falſhood. If the general Judg-
ment *be* often wrong, yet ſurely it *may* be
right; and, in many Caſes, undoubtedly
is ſo. It is therefore equally abſurd ſo to ad-
here to it, or depart from it, without other
Grounds. — When Truth and Reaſon are
on one Side of a Queſtion, and popular
Opinion of another; Singularity is Wiſdom
and Worth; But on any other Suppoſition,
Weakneſs and Folly. To affect it, and
aim at it, is neither agreeable to the Pre-
cepts of Virtue, nor the Rules of good
Sense: And however Men may diſtinguiſh
themſelves by it; it is, in Reality, at their
own Coſt. For, whatever they may ima-
gine, it will never procure them the Ap-
probation and Eſteem of wiſe Men; who,
far from admiring it, will be ſure to con-
demn it. But what we are more immedi-
ately concerned with at preſent, is the ill
Effect of it in darkening the Mind, and de-
praving the Judgment: And this is done by
drawing them aſide, and giving them a falſe
Bias in their Purſuits and Inquiries. In-
ſtead of regarding nothing but Truth, and
the

SERM. the Evidence of Truth, they are influenced

XI. by a foreign Motive ; which alters Objects and Opinions, and presents Things to the Mind in a deceitful Light. Hence singular Notions are supported and maintained, as most agreeable to the End in View, and the real Evidence of Things is artfully concealed, and kept out of Sight. In short, nothing is, or can be fairly weighed, while Vanity holds the Scale : So far from it, that the lightest Opinions frequently prevail, while the most solid Truths are found wanting.

5. Another Source of Prejudice is *Inclination* or Affection of any Kind. To which may be added, as operating the same Way, the contrary Principle of Dislike and Disaffection. When one Side of a Question pleases, and the other displeases, how difficult is it to be perfectly impartial ? When the Evidence is defective on the agreeable Side, how ready are we to supply it out of our own Imaginations ? And how dextrous in working it up to our Wishes ? Bare Possibilities we can magnify into Probabilities, and Probabilities into Certainties. Nay such is our Skill and Success in deceiving ourselves, that palpable Errors and Absurdities shall be dressed up into the Appearance of specious and plausible Truths.

Truths. In like manner, when any Point SERM.
comes before us that is disagreeable to our XI.
Humours and Inclinations, and we are
therefore very unwilling it should prove
true ; all Means are used to represent it as
an Error. The Evidence is tampered with,
and various Arts are used to weaken and
diminish it as much as possible. We are
so much prejudiced against it, and view it
in such false Lights, that we make a shift
to conclude and judge, just as we have a
Mind.—Thus, for Instance, when a Man
is deeply engaged in a vicious Course of
Life, and strongly devoted to his Lusts and
Passions ; how difficult is it to open his
Eyes, and bring him to a fair Judgment of
his own Case ? Represent to him the de-
structive Nature of Vice, both to Soul and
Body ; and shew him the Ruin that hangs
over his Head. Make it appear in the
plainest Manner, that Sin is the greatest
Folly, and Guilt the Mother of all Misery ;
and that it cannot possibly be otherwise.
What will be the Effect of such a Repre-
sentation, and how will he receive it. If
he don't shut his Eyes, and stop his Ears ;
yet he will see and hear in his own Way.
He will endeavour to believe and persuade
himself, that it is little better than Fallacy
and

SERM. and Fiction; that his Course of Life will
 XI. yield him more Pleasure than Pain; and
 that the Terrors of Futurity are mere Bug-
 bears. This he hopes and wishes; and,
 through want of other Evidence, he con-
 verts these Hopes and Wishes into Proofs
 and Probabilities. He will moreover palli-
 ate the Deformity of Sin and Vice; give
 fair Names to foul Actions, and paint them
 in milder Colours. Licentiousness he will
 call Liberty; Prodigality, Generosity; and
 Luxury, Politeness. In a Word, all kinds
 of Immorality shall be softened into Gall-
 antry, Greatness of Spirit, or some such
 deceitful Appellation.—On the other Hand,
 Wisdom and Virtue, however amiable
 in themselves, yet being disagreeable to
 him, shall be equally miscalled and mis-
 represented. Religion shall be looked up-
 on as Superstition, Piety as Hypocrisy, and
 strict Morals as Preciseness or Pedantry.
 Thus the plain Natures and essential Dif-
 ferences of Things are confounded, and
 almost lost, in a Mist of Prejudice; and
 Men choose and *love Darknes rather than*
Light, because their Deeds are evil.—Again,
 Mens Affections pervert their Judgments,
 not only in respect of Things, but Persons
 and Characters. When they dislike, and are
 prejudiced

prejudiced against each other; they can oftentimes neither see any Good, nor spare the Appearance of Evil. The smallest Blemishes are aggravated into odious Deformities, while real Excellencies are depreciated or overlooked. Every little Slip passes for a high Misdemeanour; and the most common Failings are swelled into Vices and Immoralities. On the other Hand, they urge no less partially of those whom they like and favour. Real Faults are either not seen, or industriously covered; and even heinous Crimes mitigated into Errors and Infirmities. Virtues and good Actions are magnified and doubled; and every Tendency to Merit is brightened into Excellence and Perfection. Thus Affection supplants Evidence, and serves instead of it; and Love and Hatred are made, in Effect, the Standards of Truth.

6. Lastly, No Prejudice is stronger, or more powerful, than what arises from *Interest*. (This Principle coincides with the former, as it is an Object of Inclination: But forasmuch as that Inclination is of a peculiar Nature; it may seem to require distinct Notice, and a separate Consideration.) Though indeed its Influence on Mens Minds, and its Power over their Judgments,

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XI.

SERM. Judgments, are so universally known and
 XI. observed, that it will not be needful to en-
 large much upon it. It is manifest from
 general Experience, how easily Mens Un-
 derstandings are misled and deluded by it;
 and betrayed into Errors and Misrepresen-
 tations. Hence it is, that very many Cases
 which come before them, are most deceit-
 fully weighed. Place Evidence in one
 Scale, and Interest in the other; and, with-
 out great Probity, the latter is sure to pre-
 vail. What Truth requires from us, what
 is just, and right, and fit to be done; is for
 the most Part very plain and clear; but
 alas! Interest frequently *blinds Mens Eyes*,
 and tempts them *to rest and pervert Judg-*
ment. It so darkens their Perceptions,
 and spreads such a Mist before their Un-
 derstandings, as intercepts the strongest
 Lights; and makes them judge and act in
 Opposition to Reason, Justice, and Truth.
 —Interest is *the great Diana of the Ephe-*
fians, and almost the universal Idol of
 Mankind. All People *fall down before it,*
and all Nations do it Service. It breaks
 through all Obligations, confounds all Duty,
 and God himself is rivalled by *Mammon*.
 The Perfection of Mens Minds, and the
 Purity of their Hearts, are sacrificed to
 worldly

worldly Profit; and instead of devoting SERM.
 themselves to Righteousness and Godliness, XI.
 they are governed by Gain. Whatever in- {

terferes with this, though it be of the utmost Importance, is sure to have a troublesome Aspect; and the most sacred Things and Persons an unwelcome Appearance.—

The *Gedarenes*, we find, were so offended at an expensive Miracle wrought by our Saviour; that instead of receiving the Divine Prophet, and thankfully acknowledging his Mission, *they came and besought him to depart out of their Coasts*. Conformably whereto, his pure Precepts, and heavenly Doctrines, have often been rejected on the same Account; and the glorious Light of the Gospel eclipsed by secular Motives, and sordid Considerations. In short, the most powerful Cause of Ignorance and Prejudice, Error and Darknefs, is that idolatrous Love, that *Friendship of the World, which is at Enmity with God*.

The other Branch of my Subject which I proposed to treat of, shall be deferred to another Opportunity.

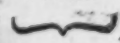


S E R M O N XII.

The Causes and Consequences of
intellectual Darkness.

MATTH. VI. Part of the 23d Verse.

*If therefore the Light that is in thee be Dark-
ness, how great is that Darkness?*

IN a former Discourse on these SERM.
Words, having premised an XII.
Explication of certain Terms 
used in the Context, the Sense
of my Text was laid down as follows. If
Reason, or Understanding, which is the
Eye of the Mind, and the Light of the
Soul, be vitiated by Prejudice, and blind-
ed by Partiality; the Consequence is Dark-
ness, profound Darkness, instead of Light;
such as fills the Mind with Errors and
Absurdities, Disorder and Confusion.—
Accordingly I proposed to shew

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Q

First,

SERM.
XII.

First, How, and by what Means and Causes, the Mind of Man is capable of being thus darkened and depraved. And

Secondly, The Degree and Extent of this Mischief, implied in the Interrogation, *how great is that Darknefs?*

The former I considered in my last Discourse, reducing the principal Causes under these six Heads, *viz.* Constitution, Custom, Authority, Singularity, Inclination, Interest; which I briefly went through, and took notice of their respective Influences, and mischievous Operations. I shall therefore now proceed to the

Second Particular, namely the Degree and Extent of this Mischief, implied in the Interrogation, *how great is that Darknefs?* For though this was, in some measure, visible, under the foregoing Head; yet it is of so great Consequence, as to require and deserve a more distinct Consideration.—The Degree of that Darknefs which is caused by such a Depravation of the Mind and Judgment, is partly discoverable from the Nature of the Thing, and partly from Fact and Experience. As to the Nature of the Thing, let it be considered,

sidered; how the Mind must needs be SERM.
affected by such a Complication and Di- XII.
versity of Prejudices concurring to obstruct
its Light, in Proportion to their Prevalence
and Dominion. We are not to consider
the Darknefs here spoken of as mere Ig-
norance, or want of Knowledge; which,
in the first Stage of Life, is the unavoida-
ble Condition of Humanity. As Truth
consists in the Relations of Ideas; it is
necessary to acquire a Stock of Ideas, be-
fore we can discover the Truths belonging
to them. And till this be done, the Mind
must needs be unenlightened, and in the
Dark. But this Darknefs gradually dis-
appears and vanishes by Observation and
Instruction; and in Process of Time Truth
is taken in, and Knowledge advanced, in
Proportion to Mens Opportunities and
Abilities. It must indeed be confessed
and lamented, that a great Part of Man-
kind, even when arrived to Years of Ma-
turity, have made but a small Progress in
Knowledge, and comparatively speaking,
continued in a State of Ignorance; either
because they have wanted, or neglected,
the Means of Instruction. On which Ac-
count, the *Light which is in them*, if it be
not *Darknefs*, yet does not rise many De-

SERM. grees above it.—However, this is not the

XII. *Darkness* spoken of in my Text; which

is much greater, and more deplorable, because harder to be dispelled, and because it produces far worse Effects. In the one Case, a Man has nothing to do but to learn; in the other Case, before he be able to learn, to any Purpose, he has a great deal to unlearn. Not only a Stock of Truth is to be laid in; but antecedently to that, a Heap of Errors and Prejudices to be thrown out. To let in the Light of Truth, the Avenues of his Understanding must not only be opened, but cleansed and scoured; and that Rubbish removed which has been gathered by a careless or vicious Education. — There is manifestly no Comparison between a Mind that is barely ignorant and uninstructed; and a Mind over-run with Error and Prejudice. In the former, Knowledge is wanted; but there is a Power, a Disposition, and a Readiness to receive it: In the latter, it is strongly obstructed; and there is not only Unaptness, and Disability, for the Reception of Truth; but oftentimes an Aversion from it.—If the Eye, whether of Body or Mind, be clear and *single*; nothing more is needful, than that a Man open

open it to the Light, and be attentive to SERM.
what he sees. But the Case of a distem- XII.
pered Sight is widely different. When
the Eye is obstructed with thick Films
and Cataracts; in order to let in Light, it
must not only be opened, but couched.
Now gross Prejudices are, as it were, the
Cataracts of the Mind; which, more or
less, disable it for Perception, and Judg-
ment, and at length terminate in Blind-
ness. This I say is the natural Effect of
them, unless they be removed and cured;
which is a Work of Trouble and Difficul-
ty, and requires great Care, Conduct, and
Resolution. The Operation is painful,
and the Event dubious. — An unpreju-
diced Mind is easily brought to Conviction.
When the Evidence of any Truth is clear
and strong, it strikes him at once, and
gains his Assent. But what avails the
clearest Evidence to those who either can-
not see it, or will not take Notice of it;
as being guided and governed by quite
different Principles? The Light and Lus-
tre of the Object is lost upon them, through
the Disease and Depravation of their Fa-
culties. Bring any Point before them;
and support it by the fairest Arguments,
and firmest Proofs: These Proofs shall

SERM. be confronted and encountered by Preju-
XII. dices stronger and mightier than they.

Great indeed is the Force of Truth; but seldom great enough to work its Way through such Obstructions. In short, the Conquest of confirmed Prejudices, and inveterate Errors, is rarely accomplished; and when it is, may be compared to the Removal of Rocks and Mountains.—It appears then, from the very Nature of the Thing, that this intellectual Disorder is, and must be, very great; extensive in its Influence, powerful in its Causes, and pernicious in its Effects. The Mind is fixed in an unnatural Situation, and its Frame and Faculties turned upside down. And indeed to determine and judge by any other Rule than that of Evidence, is as preposterous and absurd, and as contrary to the Nature of Things, as to attempt measuring Sounds by the Eye, or comparing Colours by the Ear. The sole Object of the Understanding is Truth; and the Perception of it intirely depends on our Regard and Attention to Evidence. As far therefore as we forsake this, and give up ourselves to the Guidance of Prejudice; we so far cease to be rational Beings, and Intelligence is given us in vain.—

And

And forasmuch as every Truth is connect-
ed with many more; we cannot be pre-
judiced against any, without exposing our-
selves to manifold Errors, and bringing
upon us a Train of Absurdities. And if
our Prejudices are numerous, and wide
spread; their Effects rise in Proportion,
and unite in a general Darknefs. Thus a
thick Mist is formed, which covers our
Minds, and in a great Measure deprives
us of the Use of Understanding.

But the Degree of that Darknefs which
is caused by this Corruption of Mind and
Judgment, is further evident from Fact
and Experience; as may abundantly be
discovered both in antient and modern
Times. Every Age affords Variety of
Instances; and all Histories are full of
them. If we look back to Antiquity, and
recollect the Marks and Monuments of
the Ignorance of the Gentiles, and the
Darknefs of Paganism, we shall soon find
to what a Degree the Understanding of
Mankind is capable of being corrupted
and abused, and what deplorable Effects
that Corruption produced.—This is more
especially remarkable in respect of the
Nature of the Deity, and the Worship
due to him. Though God never left

SERM.

himself without Witness; though he had

XII.

given Men Faculties abundantly capable of finding him out; though he had afforded them the strongest Proofs, and clearest Evidences, of his Existence and Attributes; his Power, Wisdom, Goodness and Perfection; yet the Strength of Mens Prejudices had so darkened their Minds, depraved their Judgments, and blinded their Understandings; as to render them almost universally ignorant of the true God, and instead of Him, to believe and worship they knew not what. How was *the Truth of God changed into a Lye*, and Mens *foolish Hearts darkened* when they not only *served the Creature more than the Creator*; but ran after their own senseless Inventions, and deified *the Works of their own Hands*? When *the Glory of the incorruptible God* was transferred to the most unintelligent Objects, and Divine Worship paid even to *Things that are not*? To Things that never had so much as a real Existence; mere empty Names, vain Imaginations, and abstract Ideas. Nor did the Choice of their Gods betray grosser Ignorance and Darkness, than their Way and Manner of serving them; which was directed and governed

by

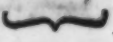
by the blindest Superftition, and moft barbarous Enthufiafm; and confifted not only in Things moft irrational and abfurd, but very often in dreadful Rites, and diabolical Oblations. SERM.
XII.

Nor were the *Jews* themfelves clear of thefe vile Practices, and Pagan Pollutions, notwithstanding their frequent Revelations, and the Conduct and Inftitution of *Mofes* and the Prophets. So far from it, that they were continually finking into the moft ftupid Idolatry; nor could even the Terrors of Mount *Sinai* keep them out of it. After the moft fignal Manifeftrations of God's Power and Majefty, they foon hardened their Hearts, and relapfed into the Follies and Abominations of the Heathens round about them.—And though by Captivity and Suffering, their Eyes were at length opened; yet how remarkably and clofely were they fhut again at the Appearance of their promifed Meffiah? What a Train of miraculous Evidence did they obftinately refift? What wonderful Works and Divine Doctrines did they fet at naught? How induftrioufly did they oppofe the ftrongeft Proofs, and fteel their Underftandings againft Conviction? In fhort, the Lownefs of his Condition, the
Mean-

SERM. Meanness of his Appearance, and the

XII. Manner of his Death, were such a *Stumbling Block* to the *Jews*; that all Arguments, and all Miracles were ineffectual; and they had neither Eyes to see, nor *Ears to hear*. *The Light that was in them became Darkness*; and how great was that *Darkness*?

But what is yet more to be lamented, even Christianity itself has been turned into Obscurity, and *the marvellous Light of the Gospel* frequently covered with the thickest Clouds of Error and Superstition. Amidst the *Brightness* of this glorious Dispensation, very many Christians have *walked in Darkness*; have *stumbled at Noon Day, as in the Night*; and groped about for the Truth like the *blindest* of the Heathens. They have been led away by such gross Delusions, and drawn into such crooked Paths, as to lose Sight, in a great Measure, both of human Reason, and divine Revelation. For must not this be the Case; must not Mens Judgments be extremely darkened and depraved, while they can embrace such corrupt Doctrines, and monstrous Absurdities, as are taught and established in the Church of *Rome*? If either Reason or Scripture is to direct us, can any thing appear more stupid and

and senseless than to believe Transubstan-^{SERM.} tiation, and worship Wafers? Certainly **XII.** nothing, unless it be the setting up of  Infallibility in the midst of such Abominations. To teach Things impossible to be true, and at the same time maintain they cannot err; is such an Indignity to human Understanding, such a Defiance of common Sense, as can neither be paralleled, nor expressed. What greatly adds to the Grievance, is the Method of supporting and propagating this Mystery of Iniquity. On the Foot of Reason and Evidence it cannot subsist one Moment. It is therefore crammed into Mens Minds by main Force, and Dint of Persecution. And so far have the Prejudices of Education and Authority prevailed; that many even well-meaning Men are brought to believe this Method not only innocent, but laudable and meritorious. And thus the Rules of Justice, and the Rights of Conscience, are shamefully violated, to make way, not for Truth, which neither needs nor allows any such Means; but for Errors and Absurdities; a Heap of Falsehood, and a Mass of Corruption. Where Evidence is not to be had, Compulsion and Violence supply its Place.

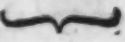
And

SERM. And indeed it must be confessed, though

XII. Men cannot always see as they are direct-

ed; yet they can always feel. Though their Understandings, in many Cases, cannot be taken hold of; yet their Senses may. And if the Kingdom of Darkness must be supported; this doubtless is the Way. For where Men dare not open their Eyes; they will seldom fail to keep them shut.

But to proceed; the Truth in my Text may be found verified in Fact, not only in respect of religious Doctrines and Worship; but also in Practice and common Life. Men betray the Bias of their Judgments, and the Blindness of their Understandings, in the Resolutions they form, and the Courses they follow. In numberless Cases we find Evidence stifled and suppressed by them; while they judge by quite different Rules, and are governed merely by Prejudice; as I observed in my former Discourse. And most certain it is, that great Darkness and Disorder are hereby introduced into their Counsels and Conduct.—Thus for Instance the *Voluptuous* Person abandons himself, without Rule or Restraint, to sensual Pleasures, and sinful Enjoyments; and persuades himself

himself that this is making the most of SERM.
his Condition, and employing his Time XII.
and his Faculties to the best Advantage. 

But is this Persuasion really the Dictate of his Understanding, and the Result of his Judgment? Or is it rather the Voice of Passion, and the Determination of Appetite? Which-ever it be, his Mind must needs be greatly darkened and depraved. If this be really his Judgment, it is as blind a one as can possibly be framed by a rational Creature. It is, in Effect, to conclude, that the State of Brute Animals is preferable to that of Angels; and that the Image of God planted in our Minds is least worthy of our Care and Concern. It is, in Effect, to conclude, that this Life is more important than the next, and a few Years of greater Moment than Eternity. And can any Conclusions be more notoriously false and perverse than these? Can any Thing argue greater Darknefs of Mind, and Pravity of Judgment?—If it be said, that, in such a Case, Men do not take Counsel of their Understandings; but follow rashly and blindly the Impulse of their Passions; this is confessedly acting in the Dark, and wilfully rejecting the Benefit of Understanding. Either then

Reason

SERM. Reason is grievously perverted, or set aside;
XII. and whether it be the one or the other,
the Mischief must needs be great, and the
Consequence fatal.

Again; if we consider the Pursuits of *Ambition*, as they are usually carried on where the Passion rises high, and reigns in full Strength; we shall find the like erroneous Conclusions, and the same Darkness and Confusion of Judgment. If the ambitious Man allow himself Leisure to reflect and deliberate, which perhaps he seldom does in respect of the End, whatever he may do as to the Means of attaining it; yet how grossly is Reason betrayed and blinded by his Inclination? In how deceitful a Light does he view Things, and how false are his Estimates? For certainly there is no Proportion between the Purchase he aims at, and the Price it must cost him. I mention not the frequent Disappointments that he is sure to meet with. Let him be supposed to prosper in his own Way, without Interruption; and all his Wishes crowned with Success. Yet what are the highest Honours of this World when set in the Balance against the Glories of the next? The one mean, empty, precarious, and perishing; and the other
solid,

solid, sublime, constant, everlasting. To SERM.
resign therefore and give up the latter for XII.
the Sake of the former, what is it but ex-
changing Pearls for Pebbles; or rather
Substances for Shadows? For, upon a
fair Comparison, the Prize of worldly Am-
bition, however tempting in Fact, is in
reality no better. That Toil and Trou-
ble, that Hurry and Bustle, that Anxiety
and Restlessness of Mind, to which it ever
exposes Men, are all in Pursuit of so piti-
ful and wretched a Bargain. In short,
both the principal Comforts of this Life,
and their grand Interest in the next, are
made a Sacrifice to this glittering Idol,
which possesses and dazles their Imagina-
tions, though it have scarce a Being any
where else.

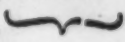
And if the Pursuits of Ambition be thus
unreasonable and injudicious; what less
can we say of *Avarice*? A Vice peculiarly
noted for blinding Mens Eyes, and con-
founding their Understandings. The
Truth is, it springs from Error, and Dark-
ness, and Depravation of Judgment; and
if it do not find Men infatuated, it is sure
to make them so. What can be more
repugnant to all the Rules of Reason and
good Sense, than the Pursuits and Mea-
sures

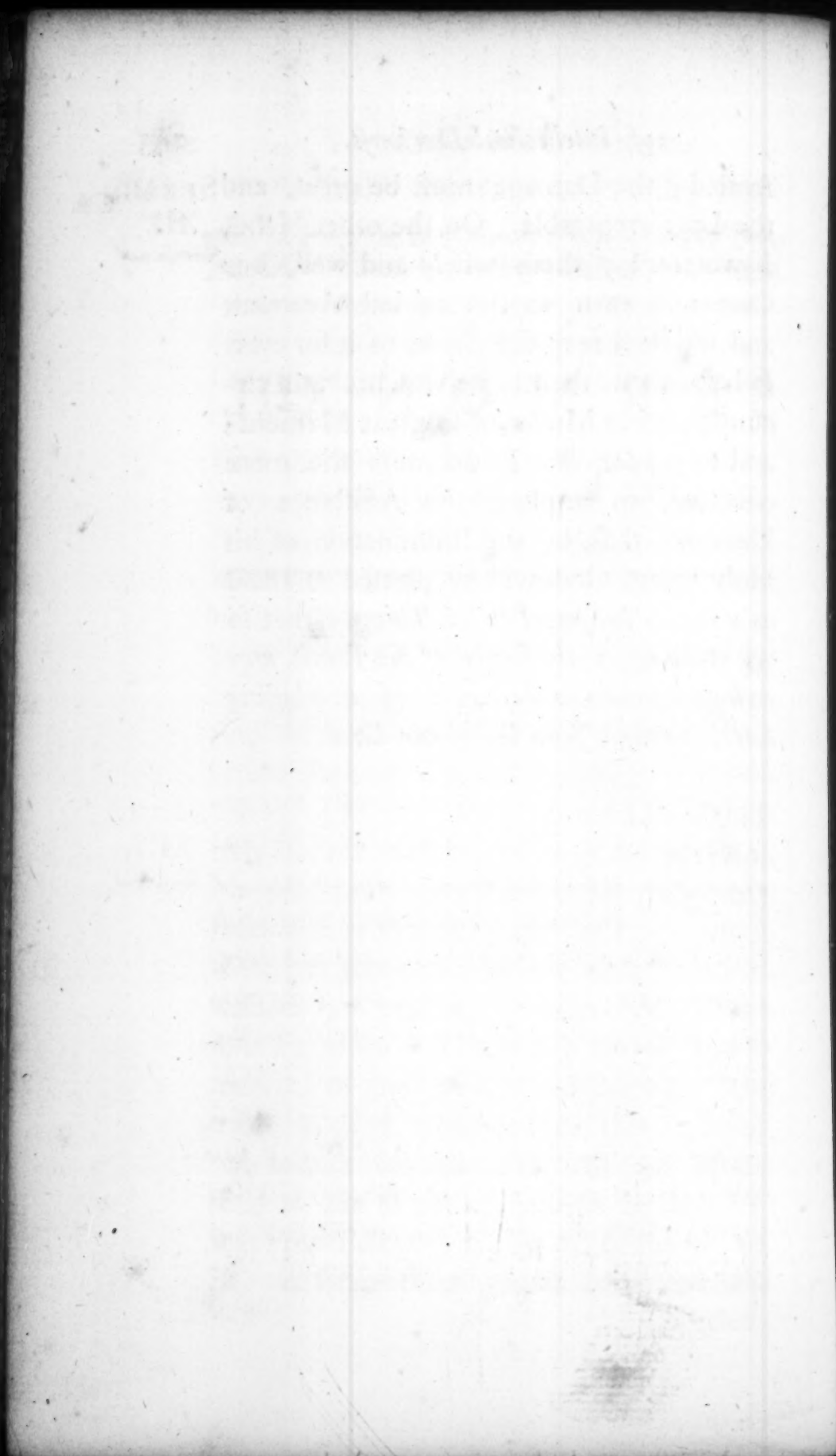
SERM. fures of a Miser properly so called? Who
 XII. toils and labours to the last Moment of his
 Life in quest of a Good that he dare not
 enjoy, and oftentimes cannot if he would :
 Who converts the means into the End,
 and ever gets for getting Sake : Who the
 longer he lives, the keener he grows ; and
 the faster he gathers, the wider he gasps :
 Who the more he abounds, the more he
 dreads Want ; and yet the better content
 he is to starve : In short, who is most so-
 licitous in making Provision for Life, when
 he is near his End, and has one Foot in
 the Grave. Such is the Wisdom of Ava-
 rice ! As opposite to Reason and sound
 Judgment, and as impossible to be ac-
 counted for, as the Dreams of a distem-
 pered Imagination.—But setting aside these
 Inconsistences and Riddles ; still the Mi-
 ser's Conduct is most egregiously foolish ;
 forasmuch as he lays up his Treasure in a
 wrong Place, and prefers *Things temporal*
 before *the Things that are eternal* : Foras-
 much as instead of improving in Wisdom
 and Virtue, and aiming to be *rich in good*
Works ; he impoverishes his own Soul,
 and lays Waste the Gifts and Graces of
 Heaven : In a Word, forasmuch as he
 sinks into *Idolatry* ; and instead of serving
 God,

God, worships *Mammon*.—Most certain it is, SERM.
 that this can never happen, can never be any XII.
 Man's Case, till the *Light* of his Mind
 be turned into *Darknefs*; and *great* must
 that *Darknefs* be. And indeed this holds
 true, more or less, of all Sins; which are
 therefore properly stiled *Works of Darknefs*.
 They set out in Ignorance and Error, and
 their whole Progress is Fraud and Delu-
 sion. Reason is undermined, Judgment
 circumvented; and by Degrees, the whole
 Powers of the Understanding vanquished.
 Thus the Mind of Man is corrupted, and
 the Image of God mangled and defaced.
 Instead of Truth and Wisdom, Falshood
 and Folly; instead of Order, Confusion;
 instead of Happiness, Misery.

Upon the Whole, if we desire effectual-
 ly to prevent these Evils, it is absolutely
 necessary that we strike at the Root of
 them. I mean, that we carefully guard
 against Prejudices of all kinds, and take
 special Care to preserve the Light of our
 Minds pure, clear, and uncorrupt. That
 the Eye of the Soul be kept *single* and sin-
 cere; fixed at all Times upon Evidence
 alone, and viewing every Object in its own
 proper Light, and genuine Colours. That
 we accustom ourselves to observe and fol-

SERM. low invariably the Rule of Truth; sted-
XII. fastly purposing to resist every Temptation,
and withstand every Propension, that may
tend to draw us from it. That we nei-
ther submit to Custom, nor Authority,
without examining, to the best of our
Power, the Grounds on which they stand,
and the Reasons brought to support them.
That we keep a strict Watch on our own
Inclinations; lest they insinuate into our
Understandings, and give a wrong Turn
to our Judgments. In fine, that no Prin-
ciple of Vanity, no Views of Interest, be
suffered to break in upon our Integrity;
but that we ever seek the Truth, in the
Love thereof, with all Simplicity and Sin-
cerity of Mind. By a careful Use of these
Means, we shall be, in a good Measure,
fortified both against erroneous Judgment,
and vicious Practice; and the Light which
God has given us will not only be main-
tained, but continually improved. Thus
our Faculties will have full Scope, and be
exerted to the greatest Advantage. And
of how great Consequence this is to us,
we cannot be ignorant. All our Hopes
and all our Welfare, depend on the Use
of those Talents which God has given us.
If we suffer them to be corrupted and
spoiled;

spoiled ; the Damage must be great, and SERM.
the Loss irreparable. On the other Hand, XII.
if we employ them wisely and well, our 
Care will turn to the noblest Account,
and we shall reap the Fruits of it for ever.
It behoves us then to be watchful and cir-
cumspect in a Matter of so great Moment ;
and to render our Endeavours the more
effectual, to implore the Assistance of
Heaven ; that, by the Illumination of his
Holy Spirit, God will be pleased *to grant*
us a right Judgment in all Things ; that so
we walking in the Light of his Truth, may
at length attain to the Light of everlasting
Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.





S E R M O N XIII.

The Love of Enemies.

MATTH. V. Part of the 44th Verse.

But I say unto you, love your Enemies.

THE Verse immediately foregoing, with which these Words are connected, runs thus: *Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy:* And then it follows, *But I say unto you, love your Enemies,* &c. From hence we must not conclude, that any such Precept was ever given the *Jews*, as that of *hating their Enemies*, or indeed any Part of Mankind. It had undoubtedly *been said* among them; that is, delivered down among their corrupt Traditions; but given in Com-

SERM.
XIII.

SERM. mand by their divine Legislator it never
XIII. was; never could be. They had formerly
by express Order, executed the Vengeance
of Heaven on several idolatrous Nations
round about them, whose Impieties had
been great, and the Measure of their Iniqui-
ties filled up; but this amounted to no such
Precept as we are speaking of. They
were only the Instruments of God's righte-
ous Judgments; which neither required
nor implied any other Hatred, than that of
the Crimes and Abominations for which
such Punishments were inflicted. Certainly
the Execution of Justice no way infers
the Destruction of Humanity. The *Jews*
indeed were very prone to confound these
Ideas; however clear and distinct they
may be in themselves. Partial to their own
Nation, they not only confined their Af-
fections and Regards thereto, but gene-
rally pursued the rest of Mankind with
Animosity or Disdain.—In Opposition to
a Temper and a Practice so inhuman, our
blessed Saviour lays down his sublime Doc-
trine, his divine Morality; requiring Men
not only to suppress all Principles of Disaf-
fection, but to entertain universal Benevo-
lence towards their Fellow-Creatures: To
be so far from despising Aliens and Strangers,

as to *honour all Men* : And instead of restraining their Good-will to their Friends, Kindred, or Country; to spread it every where, and extend it even to their very *Enemies*. — In treating of this Subject I shall briefly endeavour,

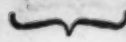
SERM.
XIII.

First, To explain and state the Duty ;
and

Secondly, To shew the Grounds on which it stands, and the Obligations incumbent on us to observe and practise it.

First, I am to explain and state the Duty here laid down. Which is the more requisite, in order to avoid that Misconstruction and those Misrepresentations, which it has frequently met with. — Most evident it is, that the Actions and Qualities of Men are in their own Nature widely different; and not only different, but oftentimes contrary to each other. Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, are essentially as opposite as Pain and Pleasure, Light and Darkness. If therefore some Actions and Qualities are necessarily approved; others must necessarily be disapproved: If some are naturally amiable; others

SERM.thers must be naturally odious. And since

XIII.  our Faculties can neither alter their proper Objects, nor make them appear otherwise than they are; they must needs affect our Minds accordingly. It is not then in our Power to approve base Actions, or be pleased with vicious Characters. More particularly, if Men are unjust and injurious; we cannot possibly esteem them as such. On the contrary, we must unavoidably dislike and condemn them in that Respect. And supposing this to be the Case of our Enemies; we cannot love them, in this Sense of the Word; nor, by Consequence, be required so to do. It is a Contradiction to Nature and Reason, that we should think well of them; or regard them with Esteem and Complacency.—We may indeed and ought to acknowledge and value such good Qualities, as they are really possessed of; but considered as unreasonable and injurious, we must dislike and disesteem them, and cannot do otherwise. We cannot see other Men wronged and ill used without a sensible Displeasure; and we never fail to blame the Authors of it. But when such Wrongs are done to ourselves, and we feel them as well as see them; there is still a greater Necessity for blaming and condemning the Doers of them.

By

By that *Love* then which is required to- SERM.
wards our *Enemies*, we are not to under- XIII.
stand the Love of *Esteem* or *Complacency*,
which in some Respects is unreasonable and
impossible; but that of *Benevolence* or *Good-*
will. An unfeigned Affection prompting
us to wish well to all Mankind, whatever
their Deserts or Demerits may be; and
disposing us to do such good Offices as
come fairly within our Power, even to our
Enemies. To return Good for Evil, Kind-
nesses for Injuries, Benefits for Provocati-
ons. To endeavour sincerely to promote
their Welfare, without Regard to Charac-
ter or Conduct; and to remember the Obli-
gations of Humanity and Charity even to
those who notoriously violate both. In
short, however we may blame their Actions,
condemn their Behaviour, and detest their
Proceedings; to seek their Good neverthe-
less, and cordially to consult their Advan-
tage. This is not only practicable, but
strictly conformable to the Rules of right
Reason, as will be shewn afterwards. In
the mean time it plainly appears, not only
from the Nature of the Thing, but from
those beneficent Acts, and kind Offices,
specified in the Words following my
Text, that the Duty here required is to be
thus

SERM. thus understood. For no Mention do we

XIII. find of any thing signifying Approbation,
 good Opinion, Esteem, or Complacency;
 but only of such Things as are the natural
 Fruits and Effects of sincere Benevolence.

*Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you,
 do good to them that hate you, and pray for
 them which despitefully use you and persecute
 you.* And this Explanation is further con-

firmed in the Verse following, which re-
 fers us to the Example and Imitation of
 our heavenly Father. For though God is
 loving and gracious to all; showering down
 his Blessings, without Distinction, on the
Just and on the Unjust; yet the latter are
 ever displeasing and offensive to him, and
 the Objects of his just Indignation. He is
 bountiful to the Wicked, his professed Ene-
 mies; but his Favour and Esteem they can
 never obtain: So far from it that they are
an Abomination to him, and their Ways de-
 testable in his Sight. If they continue such,
 they will finally be destroyed; but at the
 same time, God is so far from having Plea-
 sure in their Death and Destruction; that
 he earnestly seeks their Recovery, and de-
 sires their Welfare. So plain, and just, and
 necessary, is the Distinction before us, be-
 tween that Love which consists in *Benevo-*
lence,

lence, and that which consists in Complacency and *Esteem*. And yet by confounding and mixing these Ideas, we are very apt to entertain wrong Notions of this Duty ; to misrepresent it to ourselves and others, and magnify the Difficulty of putting it in Practice. — In short, as Men appear to us in their Actions and Characters, so we must unavoidably think of them ; and if we judge them according to Truth, Equity, and Candor, we are so far acquitted. But whatever their Actions or Conduct may be ; whatever Grounds we may find for Esteem or Disesteem ; whether they be just, or injurious ; peaceable, or turbulent ; kind, or cruel ; we are bound to wish them well, and to make use of all proper Means, Methods and Opportunities, of befriending them. SERM. XIII.

Let it be further observed, that however the Precept in my Text be understood ; it evidently disallows, and utterly excludes, all Kinds of Revenge and Retaliation. That fixed Principle of Benevolence, that constant Disposition to do Good, which are manifestly implied in it, cannot possibly admit of any Purposes or Intentions of doing Evil, on any Occasion, or any Provocation. 'Tis true indeed that neither the Prevention, nor the Reparation of Injuries are inconsistent

SERM.

XIII.

sistent with this divine Rule. As we may innocently and reasonably guard against them, so we may lawfully propose due Satisfaction; provided we aim at nothing further than righting ourselves, without any malicious View, or revengeful Design. We are allowed to provide for our own Safety, and preserve our own just Rights; and may justly make use of such Means as are requisite for these Ends: But repairing of Injuries is one Thing, and returning them another. The one is perfectly consistent with the Benevolence here required; the other a direct Violation of it. I add, that however we may fail of obtaining Reparation; this will justify no Degree of Ill-will; much less any Thoughts or Intentions of Revenge. For, as our Duty has no Dependence on any such Events; so neither is our Disposition to be influenced by them.

Our benevolent Affections, and good Offices, are not then to be obstructed by Injuries and Ill-treatment. We see our Enemies are intitled to our Good-will even when they have lost their own. Their Conduct, be what it will, cannot alter our Rule, nor cancel our Obligations; which require us to be well-affected towards the greatest-Evil doers, and over ready to promote

mote their Good. We are not bound in-SERM.
deed to set Enemies on a Level with XIII.
Friends. Equal Measures of Benevolence
cannot be due; neither are they demanded:
But however it may differ in Degree, or
whatever Precedence be allowed, it must
be extended to the former as well as the
latter, and demonstrated in Act and Deed
on all proper Occasions. Neither the En-
gagements of Friendship, nor Proximity of
Blood, must engross our Affections and
Good-Offices; which are due, in Propor-
tion, to every Part of Mankind, Enemies
not excepted. — To make this appear, I
shall proceed in the

2^d Place, To shew briefly the Grounds
of this Duty, and the Obligations incum-
bent on us to observe and practise it. This,
I think, will be sufficiently done, by set-
ting forth the Reasonableness, the Excel-
lence, and the Advantage of it. For on
these Grounds, enforced by Divine Au-
thority, the Duty stands; and from thence
our Obligations arise.—Of the *Reasonable-
ness* of this Duty there would be little or no
Occasion for Proof; were not Men so
prone to consult their Passions, instead of
their Understandings. For most evident it
is, that returning Injuries for Injuries, En-
mity

SERM. mity for Enmity, can never possibly be
XIII. justified to the impartial Reason of their
own Minds. Have ill Offices been done us?
Have we been hardly used, and injuriously
treated, without Provocation, and without
Cause? Be it supposed; what follows?
Doubtless we may justly blame and condemn
such Proceedings. But what then? If
others have acted wrongfully; can this be
a Reason for our acting foolishly? If they
have been unreasonable and perverse, must
we needs follow their Example? To do
Evil designedly, on any Occasion, is un-
doubtedly Folly at least, because it means
nothing; that is, nothing but Mischief;
which, of itself, can never be a rational
Motive. If it were only acting in vain,
and to no End; it would be manifestly ab-
surd: But it goes further; it is acting to
a bad Purpose, and producing an Effect
worse than nothing. It is not only lost La-
bour, and fruitless Employment; but is
really going backwards, and counter-work-
ing the Ends of Nature and Providence. In
short, it is doing that very Thing, which
a wise Man will always endeavour to pre-
vent, as far as lies in his Power. For what
can be more agreeable to Reason and Wis-
dom, than to keep Evil, as much as possible,
out

out of the World ; and when it is in, to use all proper Means to drive it out? Instead of this, as Enmity lets it in ; so Revenge keeps it there, and propagates it. The one opens the Door for it ; and the other holds it open, and widens it. But perhaps it will be said, that returning of Injuries does promote a real End, and that a desirable one ; forasmuch as it gratifies a natural Passion. I answer, that Nature disowns any such Passions ; unless we mean corrupt Nature ; or Custom, which is called second Nature. The Passion truly natural is universal Benevolence ; to answer which is the noblest Gratification ; and to obstruct it, the greatest Detriment. And though Anger be truly natural, yet it never was intended for any such Purpose. The true Use and Intent of it are the repelling of Injuries, not the revenging of them. And whenever that Affection carries Men this Length, it is always grossly corrupted. —It may be further urged, that all Injuries and wilful Wrongs are Actions of ill Desert, and criminal in their own Nature ; and, by Consequence, ought in Reason and Equity to be punished accordingly. Be this allowed ; such Actions are indeed justly punishable : But by whom ?

SERM. whom? Not by us; who neither know
 XIII. how to do it; nor have any Right

to undertake it: But by Him surely,
to whom Vengeance belongeth; and who
 alone is qualified to execute it rightly.

—Besides, this is a dangerous Plea, and
 may easily recoil upon our own Heads. If
 we insist rigorously on the Punishment of
 all Wrongs and Indignities; do we not, in
 Effect, pass Sentence against ourselves? For
 have we not all offended, frequently
 and grievously, the Divine Majesty? And
 do we not therefore continually stand in
 need of his Mercy and Forgiveness? On
 this Account, we ought to take special
 Heed that we do not preclude our only Plea,
 and overturn the Foundation of all our
 Hopes. Especially since we are assured,
that what Measure we mete to our Fellow-
Creatures, will be measured to us again by
 our common Creator, and supreme Judge.

—Again; we are very apt to consider our
 Enemies as unworthy of our Benevolence,
 as well as Esteem. Concerning the former,
 their very Sensibility is a Title which can
 never be forfeited; as appears from the fore-
 mentioned Account: And as to the latter,
 we may easily be mistaken. It may per-
 haps be claimed and deserved in other Re-
 spects.

spects. However, at least it becomes us to SERM.
remember whose Creatures they are, and XIII.
whose Image they bear. Be they never so
worthless, injurious, or wicked; they carry a Divine Stamp in their Nature that demands universal Regard, and protects them from Contempt. On this Account, we are bound even to *honour all Men*; be their personal Characters never so faulty. — But to return, Benevolence and Humanity are always reasonable; and by Consequence ever due to the whole Species. Whenever we have a fair Opportunity of doing Good, it is always fit to be done; nor can any thing release us from the Obligation. To communicate and promote Happiness is certainly acting to the best Purpose, and producing the most worthy Effects that we are capable of. Whatever Wrongs we may have sustained; they can never be returned in kind without a Violation of our own Duty, and a Participation of our Enemies Guilt; nor indeed without doing Wrong to ourselves, and debasing the Dignity of our Nature. In short, Right Reason can never consent to the doing of Evil; nor allow Men to decline doing Good, when fit Opportunities offer. However they may be injured, or provoked;

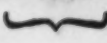
SERM. the Rule of Truth remains the same, and
 XIII. must be observed. Passion is a blind Guide;
 and unless it be checked and controlled by
 Reason, is sure to lead them astray, and
 involve them in Guilt and Misery.

I proceed in the next Place to consider
 the *Excellence* of this Duty. Though all
 Duties are reasonable, yet they may not
 be, neither are they of equal Dignity. General
 Benevolence is general Virtue; the
 true Principle of a rational Mind, and the
 great Support and Ornament of Society.
 But in Benevolence towards Enemies there
 is additional Worth, peculiar Grace and
 Glory. This raises Mens Minds, and exalts
 their Affections to the sublimest Pitch. It is
 not only excellent, as it is less common
 and more difficult than other Virtues; but
 as it is in itself intrinsically great and God-
 like. It denotes in a particular Manner
 the Liberty, the Power, the Prerogative
 of the Mind; the Dominion of Reason,
 and the Conquest of Passion. It argues
 good Order and Government of Spirit; a
 sacred Regard to Truth, and an invincible
 Affection for Peace. For Peace both with-
 in and without, public and private; for
 establishing the Tranquillity of a Man's
 own Breast, maintaining the Harmony of
 the

the World, and promoting the Glory of SERM.
its great Governor.—But the Excellence of XIII.
this Virtue more especially appears from its {
peculiar Conformity to the Divine Exam-
ple. By loving and befriending our Ene-
mies, we become Imitators of God's uni-
versal Goodness; and in the noblest Sense
Children of our Father which is in Heaven;
who, as we read in the Verse following in
my Text, *maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil*
and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the
Just and on the Unjust. His Blessings are
scattered promiscuously, and without Dis-
tinction, on Friends and Enemies, the
Righteous and the Wicked. And not only
the common Blessings of Life are thus com-
municated; but for us all, even *while*
we were Sinners, and when we were Ene-
mies, He graciously provided the Means of
Reconciliation and Redemption, and *sent*
his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.
—And what a Pattern has our Redeemer
likewise set us of this Divine Virtue? He
has shewn greater Love, and greater Friend-
ship to his Enemies, than any other Person
ever did, or ever could do, even to
the dearest Friends. To Enemies fierce
and cruel, obstinate and implacable; and
S 2 who

SERM. who impiously deprived him of that Life,
 XIII. which was both taken up, and laid down,
 { for their Sakes. In a Word, for his Enemies he lived and died ignominiously, and wretchedly ; in Pain and Poverty, Misery and Torment. Thus was his Precept fully exemplified in his own Practice; who thereby shewed us, that the greatest Abhorrence of Sin is perfectly consistent with the greatest Kindness and Compassion for Sinners.

Lastly, I proposed to take notice of the *Advantages* and Benefits which redound from the Practice of this Duty. And most evident they are, both in respect of Society, and every Individual. It is not perhaps easy to determine whether greater Mischief be done Society by the Aggressors in Wrong, or the Continuators of it ; by the Beginners of Enmity, or the Fomentors of it : But without Question it suffers greatly from both ; who are answerable between them for the most and the worst Evils that infest human Life. However, since the Corruption of our Nature is such, that many Men are, and will be unjust and injurious ; it would doubtless be of infinite Service to the Public, if the Precept in my Text was generally observed and practised. Innumerable

numerable Broils, Feuds, Contentions, Anger, SERM.
mosities, would be hereby either prevented, XIII.
or soon stopped. Such a Habit, such a 
Disposition, when rooted in the Minds of
Men, would grow up into a firm Bank
against the Overflowings of Ill-will, and
the Inundations of Strife. The Wrongs
that were done would slide away gently,
without spreading, or giving much Dis-
turbance to the Community; and in a
little Time be swallowed up and lost in
the wide Ocean of Charity. — And as to
the private Advantages arising from the
Discharge of this Duty, they are manifestly
great and unquestionable. For not to re-
peat, what has been already mentioned,
the Peace and Tranquillity of a Man's
own Mind; Benevolence is a natural and
never-failing Source of the purest Pleasure,
and most sincere Satisfaction. And when
it is exercised towards Enemies, yields a
Delight of the highest and most heavenly
Nature. To conquer a wild Affection,
and quell a mutinous Passion; to maintain,
against all Opposition, the Authority of
Religion, the Empire of Reason, and the
Majesty of Truth; affords a wise Man
more solid Joys, and more durable Tri-
umphs, than all the World about him

SERM. can equal. Tho' Injuries may hit him, or
 XIII. even wound him; yet those Wounds never
 feister, or corrupt, as in the Case of an ill
 Habit; but are easily and instantly healed
 by the balsamic Virtue of his own Mind,
 And moreover, they seldom either bring
 much Smart with them, or leave a visible
 Scar behind them. To which must be
 added, that the greatest Malevolence,
 Cruelty, and Rage, are hereby soonest soft-
 ened, if not subdued; as by a contrary
 Disposition they are increased and inflamed.
 The hardest Hearts may relent, and be
 won by Patience, Gentleness, and Good-
 will; and the greatest Enmity be converted
 into Friendship. This Virtue not only
 lessens the Number of Enemies, but
 changes the very Nature of them; not only
 disarms, but civilizes; not only mollifies
 their rugged Dispositions, but melts them
 into Kindness and Compassion. In short,
 it directly tends to universal Peace and
 Good-will among Men; and were it duly
 practised, would give a truer Idea of the
 Happiness of Heaven, than ever the
 World was yet blessed with.

From this Divine Doctrine many use-
 ful Inferences and Conclusions might be
 drawn; but my Time will only permit
 me

me to mention this single Observation. If SERM.
the Truth and Purity of any Religion are XIII.
to be measured by the Excellence of its
Doctrines and Precepts; as without ques-
tion, this is the best and surest Rule; it
will be impossible either to doubt of Chri-
stianity, or disown its Pre-eminence and
Perfection. The Precept before us is of
so sublime and transcendent a Nature; and
such a peculiar Stress is laid upon it in the
Gospel; as sufficiently discovers its high
and heavenly Original. 'Tis true indeed,
the Wisdom of the Antients did not quite
overlook it; the Philosophers of old have
touched upon it: But how seldom, how
sparingly, how faintly, in Comparison of
what we find done by Christ and his A-
postles? Of this, and other Instances of
the like Nature, what Account is to be
given? Is it to be imagined, that obscure,
uneducated, illiterate Persons, should see
further into human Nature, or be able to
form a more intire and complete System of
Morality, than had ever been done by the
profoundest Philosophers, or the united
Sages of Antiquity? Without Inspiration,
and the Assistance of Heaven, nothing is
more incredible. But this is a Point not
to be pursued at Length in the Conclusion

SERM. of a Discourse.—What remains at present,
XIII. is, that we thankfully embrace the Instruc-
tion of such Divine Teachers, and the
Direction of such heavenly Guides. That
to their Rules and Precepts we conform
our Actions, Manners, Lives, and Conver-
sations. Thus will our Hearts be purified,
and our Minds eminently improved: Thus
shall we be rendered *a peculiar People zealous of good Works*: And, in fine, thus shall
we exalt our Natures; and, as far as hu-
man Infirmary will permit, become *perfect*
as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.



S E R M O N XIV.

Future Rewards proportionable to
present Improvements.

G A L. Ch. VI. Verse 7.

*Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For
whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he
also reap.*

MEN are prone to deceive them-
selves in many Things; but
perhaps in nothing more, than
that very Concern, wherein
Deception is most to be dreaded, as being
of the most fatal Consequence. I mean
their future Welfare, and eternal Salva-
tion. In other Cases it may redound,
more or less, to their Loss and Damage;
but in this it may terminate in utter Ruin.
Would we deal with ourselves fairly and
honestly,

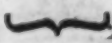
SERM.
XIV.

SERM. honestly, we should seldom or never fail
XIV. to discover what we may depend on, and
 what we must do, in order to secure this
great Point. But alas! blinded and misled
by the trivial Temptations of this present
Life, we either cannot or will not see what
belongs to the next. We neither estimate,
nor provide for it as we ought: And in-
stead of complying with those Terms
which God has ordained and fixed, we
are apt to frame Terms of our own, and
have Recourse to Cunning and Tricks.
To keep our Sins and sensual Inclinations,
and to avoid the Trouble, as we reckon it,
of real Reformation and virtuous Improve-
ment, we contrive many Expedients, and
practise every Art of Self-delusion. In-
stead of sincerely discharging our Duty,
we search about for a Sort of Equiva-
lents; which we are willing to hope may
serve instead of it. Any Principle, any
Doctrine which looks this Way, is readily
caught at, and eagerly embraced; and
the Consequence is very often a ground-
less Reliance thereon. While we neglect
the *one Thing needful*, the Condition in-
dispensably necessary; we are apt to lay
the whole Stress of our Hopes, on Terms
of our own making. Thus we are apt
to

to expect every thing from the Mercy of SERM.
God, or the Merits of our Redeemer; XIV.
from a forward Faith, or sanguine Profes-
sions; from the Observance of some par-
ticular Duty, or a partial and fruitless Re-
pentance. These, and the like Principles,
misapplied or misunderstood, often serve
to deceive us effectually, and carry us out
of the Road of Truth and Virtue. And
indeed almost any thing suffices to mislead
us, when we are willing to be misled.—
But however we may deceive ourselves, *God*
is not mocked, cannot be deceived. In re-
spect of Him, vain are all our Arts and
Evasions. The Terms on which his Fa-
vour is to be obtained, are immoveably
fixed; and though we may first wish, and
then imagine, that other Things will an-
swer our Purpose as well, we are sure to
be finally disappointed. We may delude
ourselves, at our own Cost, all the Days
of our Life; but if either Reason or Re-
velation be to be trusted, the Rule in my
Text will assuredly take place, and hold
good for ever. *Whatsoever a Man soweth,*
that shall he also reap. This informs us at
once what we are to expect, and how we
are to provide. Though the Expression
be figurative, yet the Meaning of it is
plain

SERM. plain and obvious to every Understanding.

XIV. And though it be verified in some Measure here; yet chiefly and more especially hereafter. For this Life is properly our Seed-Time, and the Season of Harvest the next: When we shall not fail to *reap* according to what we have *sown*. Whether we have done well or ill, improved our Nature and our Talents, or debased the one, and wasted the other; we shall be dealt with accordingly, and reap the Fruits of our own Doings. No Dispensations either of Nature or Grace will ever break in upon this Rule, as being immutably founded on Truth and Equity.— A blessed Immortality is the Object of all our Hopes and Desires; and we are apt to flatter ourselves with a Title thereto on very precarious and uncertain Grounds, as before I took notice. Was but the great and weighty Truth in my Text impressed on our Minds, and fixed in our Memories, it would make us less sanguine and presumptuous in judging of our own Case, and be apt to engage us in safer Measures than we commonly follow. We should then never forget that our future Success intirely depends on our present Conduct, and that without due Preparation, and
real

real Improvement, we shall have nothing SERM.
to reap hereafter but Grief and Disappoint- XIV.
ment, Sorrow and Misery.—If then it be 
inquired, wherein this Preparation, this
Improvement consists; I answer, in right
Affections, worthy *Actions*, and virtuous
Habits. This is the Seed to be sown, the
Provision to be made here upon Earth,
if we would secure our Hopes and Expec-
tations of an heavenly Harvest. Let us
consider these important Particulars in the
Order just mentioned.

1. By *right Affections*, I mean Affec-
tions placed on right Objects. A Quali-
fication absolutely necessary for a due Dis-
charge of our present Obligations, and
the Enjoyment of that Happiness we hope
for hereafter. The Goods of this World,
being present and sensible, frequently en-
gage our Hearts before we have well exa-
mined them. Being first acquainted with
them, we insensibly contract a Fondness
for them; pursue them eagerly, and take
great Pains to procure them. And if there
are no better to be had, who can blame
us? If nothing more valuable is within our
Reach; if we are made capable of no
higher Enjoyments, or know not how to
obtain them; what Wonder if we set our
Hearts

SERM. Hearts on the Things before us, and turn

XIV. the whole Stream of our Endeavours this

Way? But surely that is not the Case.

Without disparaging the Things of this

World, we may find Objects far superior,

and prefer them accordingly. If indeed

Men had no Powers, no Principles above

Sense, they would have no occasion to

look further; the Provisions of this Life

would certainly suffice. But immaterial,

rational, immortal Souls, may and ought

to extend their Views, and look out for a

Good more solid and durable; a Good,

which may not only amuse and entertain

for a little while, but be adequate to the

Capacities of the Mind, suit its nobler

Powers, and satisfy them for ever. And

if such a Good there be, as doubtless there

is, we shall be miserably wanting to our-

selves if we do not carefully provide for it,

and exert our best and utmost Endeavours

for the Attainment of it. But this can

never be done while we think of it with

Indifference, or perhaps Dislike and Dis-

affection. There must be Inclination as

well as Object, in order to produce Hap-

piness. The Necessity of such an Inclination, together with the Insufficiency of

worldly Goods, manifestly appear from

Scripture ;

Scripture; which exprefly requires us, to SERM.
fet our Affections on Things above, and not XIV.
on Things on the Earth: To be not conform-
ed to this World; to ufe it as not abufing it;
and many other Directions we find of the
like Nature. Which certainly can mean
nothing lefs, than that our Hearts are not
to be difpofed of here below; but to be
referved for a better State, and more va-
luable Enjoyments. Nothing hinders but
that the Things of this Life may be re-
garded and purfued in Proportion to their
Worth; but we fhould not fuffer them to
rival, much lefs exclude the Things above;
as being, in all refpects, infinitely more
worthy of our Affection and Choice. The
Shadow of Blifs may be here; and the
Subftance is there: And a more excellent
more *enduring Subftance* it is, than Tongue
can tell or Heart conceive. The external
Advantages of that blefled State we know
little or nothing of; yet there is juft
Ground to carry our Conjectures very high.
For, confidering what Objects, what Won-
ders are fpread before us here below, dur-
ing our State of Trial; how great, how
glorious a Scene, may we fuppofe will be
opened above in a State of Reward and
Perfection! But however this may be, we
are

SERM. are sure that the Foundation of all our
 XIV. Happiness, and all our Joys must be laid
 { in the Mind; in an absolute Devotion to
Truth and Virtue, and an ardent uninterrupted *Love of God and Man*. From this
 internal Source must ever spring the purest
 Delight, and the noblest Part of our Bliss.
 Here then should our Affections unite and
 center. These spiritual Goods not only
 demand our Hearts, but deserve them be-
 yond all Comparison. The Enjoyments
 of Sense are perishing and transient, vain
 and unsatisfying; but the Satisfaction of
 the Mind, divine in their Nature, and du-
 rable as itself.—Yet perhaps it may be
 asked, are our Affections subject to our
 Wills, and intirely at our Disposal? Is it
 in our Power to direct and transfer them
 when and where we please? Are not some
 Objects necessarily amiable, and others
 unavoidably odious? How then can it de-
 pend on our Determinations what we e-
 steem, and what we dislike? Such a Plea,
 such an Objection as this, might have its
 Weight, supposing us required to set our
 Hearts on Things unamiable or worthless.
 But who dare harbour such a Thought?
 Who can conceive such an Idea of that
 Heavenly Good here spoken of? A Good,
 not

not only real, but supremely amiable and SERM.
excellent in itself, and in its own Nature. XIV.

And if it appears not such to our Minds, what is the Reason? Because perhaps it appears not to them at all. It may be, we seldom or never think of it; and if this be the case, as too often it is, what Wonder if we are not smitten with an unknown Object? What Wonder if its Excellence escape us, and all its Charms are lost on us? Whereas if we kept it in Sight, and meditated on it much and often, it would not fail to recommend itself; to gain that Place in our Esteem and Affection, which it peculiarly merits. Hence arises our Power, and by Consequence our Obligation, to prepare and dispose our Minds in the Manner before-mentioned. Every Man living may be acquainted with it, if he will; and the better he knows it, the more he must admire it. A sincere Love and Reverence for God and Goodness, is a Disposition so natural, so reasonable, so delightful, that without extreme Ignorance, or Perverseness, it could never be refused the first Place in the Heart of Man. However, it is a Seed absolutely necessary to be sown there, if we mean to reap that Heavenly Harvest,

SERM. which is the great Object of our Wishes,
 XIV. and the ultimate End of all our Endeavours. But

Secondly, The natural Consequence of right *Affections* is good and worthy *Actions*. For out of the Heart Mens Actions commonly proceed, both good and bad. It is indeed rather to be wished that their Actions came directly from their Understandings; but in Fact, Men are much more, and oftener governed by their Affections and Dispositions: Either those with which they are born, or those which are acquired in the Course of Life. Whatever be the Source of them, nothing in the World is of so great Importance. Good Actions are the great Business of Life; and I may add, the very End of our Creation. Our Welfare, both temporal and eternal, depend upon them; the former in a great Measure, and the latter intirely. Both Reason and Revelation assure us that all Men will be *judged*, and finally dealt with, according to their Works. And if it be inquired, What Works? I answer, of all Kinds that fall within the Compass of our Abilities and Opportunities. Whatever tends to the Glory of God, the Benefit of our Fellow-Creatures, or the Welfare of ourselves,

ourselves, must be morally good, and SERM. therefore our Duty, under the fore-men- XIV.
tioned Limitations. Our Obligations ex-
tend to all Actions of this Nature; not
equally indeed, but universally. Different
Degrees of Moment and Importance
we find allowed in Scripture, and a pe-
culiar Stress laid on some Duties preferably
to others. The Rule therefore is, to ne-
glect none; but to be more especially so-
licitous about those which are most weigh-
ty and most necessary, and to exert our-
selves in Proportion to that Difference, as
far as we are able to discover it.—We
find a distinguishing Regard shewn, even
by our Saviour himself, to Works of Be-
neficence, Charity, and Mercy; which
he particularly inculcates, and presses on
all Occasions: Even so far as to separate
them and single them out, for that solemn
Representation of the Last Day which we
find recorded in the Gospel. Not mean-
ing to exclude or depreciate other Virtues;
but to establish the Excellence of these,
and impress it more strongly on the Minds
of his Disciples. Nor was this Pre-emi-
nence observable only in his Doctrines and
Discourses; but also in his Actions and
Conduct. For as he came into the World

SERM. with the most gracious and merciful De-
XIV. sign, so all his Transactions in it were most
beneficent. His Divine Benefits and Blessings were diffused all around him, and he continually *went about doing good*. From whence then it appears, that, while Christians are obliged carefully *to maintain all Kind of Good Works*; a principal Regard is ever due to the *Royal Law* of Charity; to Acts of Mercy, and Labours of Love. The Reasons are obvious: It contributes in a peculiar Manner to knit the Hearts of Mankind; promotes Benevolence, and produces Gratitude; is not only useful to Society, but absolutely necessary to its well-being. However it might subsist and be supported by Justice, yet its Happiness and Prosperity essentially depend on the Prevalence of Good-Will, and a mutual Discharge of kind Offices. In such a Disposition, so exercised and exerted, the Virtue and Happiness of all rational Beings must for ever consist. Hereby Men imitate and resemble their great Creator, whose Communications of Good are without Measure, and without End. It is not therefore to be wondered, that we should be so strongly and indispensably bound to *go and do likewise* in our
little

little Spheres, and in Proportion to the SERM.
Powers which he has given us.—Good XIV.

Works then must necessarily be *sown* in this present Season; and whether we *sow* them *bountifully* or *sparingly*, we are expressly assured that we shall *reap* accordingly. The selfish Man, whose Charity begins and ends at Home, however wise and wary he may appear in his own Eyes, will be found at least a mere Prodigal; as having lavished away the Opportunities of providing for Futurity. Whatever Affluence he may possess in this Life, he is sure to leave it naked and destitute; and, though he die immensely rich, go a Beggar into another World. For there our whole Substance will consist in the Good we have done, or endeavour to do. On the other Hand, He who is *rich in Good-Works*, will find himself rich indeed: Possessed of a Treasure which will never fade, which no Time can diminish, no Fraud corrupt, no Violence take away. Nay it will be continually increased, and abundantly improved.—In fine, good and virtuous Actions will eternally reward themselves, and yet be eternally rewarded. The Mind of the Agent will be continually feasted by reflecting on them; at the

SERM. same time that they entitle him to Joys
XIV. and Glories unspeakable. The Favour of
God, which is hereby secured, is an inexhaustible Fund of Felicity. For as his Power is infinite, so his Goodness knows no Bounds.—Of this Favour and these Rewards, Virtue must ever be the most proper Object. Virtuous Actions are intrinsically worthy, and of good Desert. And they are yet more worthy, when they expose the Agent to great Hardships and Sufferings. To sacrifice chearfully whatever is dearest in Life, and perhaps Life itself to the Glory of God, or the Good of the Publick, constitutes a Character truly heroick, and gives a noble Idea of Christian Perfection. Such a Character must be universally approved; and every intelligent Being would reward it, if it lay in his Power. What Approbation then, what Favour, what Reward may it not expect from an all-powerful and all-perfect Judge! The supreme Lover of Virtue, and great Patron of all Goodness. Especially when recommended and enforced by the unspeakable Merits of our Redeemer; who purchased for his faithful Servants that *Crown of Life*, which he alone was capable of purchasing. And indeed the very
best

best Men, in several Respects, stand in SERM.
Need of his Mediation; and that in per- XIV.
fect Consistence with the Doctrine in my 
Text. To be released from the Powers
and Penalties of Sin, from which no Man
was free; and restored to the Privilege of
a blessed Immortality, even in a more
glorious and blissful State; could not have
been expected, on any other Terms, by
the most virtuous and most deserving Part
of our degenerate Race. Yet we must
not imagine that our Saviour's Merits
could ever supersede our Obedience and
good Works. They extend no further in
respect of us, than to render the Discharge
of our Duty available, and effectual to
our eternal Salvation. Still it depends on
our Care and Conduct, whether we are
finally to *reap Corruption*, or a blessed and
glorious Immortality. But

Thirdly, As good *Affections* produce good
Actions; so good *Actions*, often repeated,
produce and form virtuous *Habits*. We
have not a sufficient Insight into the Na-
ture and Constitution either of our Minds
or Bodies, to be able to account for the
Formation of *Habits*; But the Fact plainly
is what I have just now mentioned. By a
Perseverance in well-doing, and a continu-

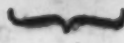
SERM, ed Exercise of particular Virtues, good

XIV. Habits are contracted; and, as far as we know, there is no other Way to produce them. However unable we may be to understand the Nature of Habits, and the Manner of their Production; yet the great Importance of them is easily discovered, and well deserves to be carefully considered. An irregular Discharge of our Duty, an occasional Obedience, an intermitting Virtue, will never answer our Purpose. It concerns us, on many Accounts, to be uniform and stedfast in well-doing, and to persevere in it to our Lives End. And of this we can have no tolerable Security, till good Habits be acquired and formed. Without this, human Virtue is most precarious; ever exposed to the Force of Temptation; which may at any time prevail against our clearest Convictions, and break down our strongest Resolutions. Whereas a Mind fortified by good Habits, and the Grace of God may be deemed impregnable. Being secure within, it fears no Attacks from without. As our chief Danger arises from the Corruptions of our Nature, and the Strength of sinful Inclinations; so our Safety is owing to the Conquest thereof; and that Conquest is
then

then only compleated, when we are ar-
rived at the habitual Practice of Virtue. SERM. XIV.

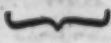
When a Man has got the Reins into his own Hand, and knows how to govern his Lusts and Passions, he is then his own Master, and therefore safe. But this Liberty and this Dominion are only to be acquired by Habits of Self-Government: A few Acts of Self-Denial will not suffice to assert his Freedom, and fix his Authority; which requires a steady Opposition to the Encroachments of Appetite, and the Tyranny of sinful Lusts.—It may further be observed, that as good Habits secure and strengthen Virtue, so they very much facilitate the Practice of it. 'Tis the very Nature of all Habits to remove Difficulties, and make Men act with Ease, whatever they take in hand. Our Saviour declares, that *his Yoke is easy, and his Burthen light*. But how, and to whom? Not to Beginners in Well-doing, unless they set out very early: But to Practitioners and Proficients: To those who have in a good Measure, mortified their Lusts, and conquered their Corruptions. It undoubtedly is, and must be difficult and troublesome to a young Convert, to maintain his Ground, and bear up against a violent
Temp.

SERM. Temptation ; to resist an eager Appetite,
XIV. and silence a clamorous Affection. But
when he has been accustomed to the Rules
of Virtue, and the Practice of his Duty ;
such Hardships either cease, or if not
quite ceased, are surmounted with Ease.
—But this is not all : The Duties of Religion,
when become habitual, are generally discharged,
not only with Ease, but Pleasure. This is partly
owing to the Force of Custom, and partly to the
Reasonableness of the Duties themselves, and
their Agreeableness to human Nature. To honour
and worship God, to promote the Welfare of
Mankind, and maintain the Government of our
own Minds, are confessedly Duties so just and
fit, that nothing can be wanting to recommend
them to us, and render them agreeable, but
Custom and Practice. As soon as they are
wrought into Habits, they never fail to become
satisfactory and delightful. The very Exercise
of Self-denial need not be excepted. For besides
the Pleasure of Victory, a Victory of the noblest
Kind ; to reduce the Animal Powers to Order
and Subjection, and put a Stop to the Struggles
and Confusion of wild Appetites, and fierce
Passions, cannot fail to produce

produce immediate Comfort. Such we SERM.
may well reckon that pleasing Calm and XIV.
Serenity of Mind, that sweet Composure
and happy Harmony resulting from thence. 
To which may be added the Conscious-
ness of obtaining these Advantages by a
laudable and virtuous Conduct.—Hence
then we may plainly perceive how impor-
tant, how necessary, good Habits are to
fit us for that blessed State which we hope
for hereafter; as directly conducing at all
times to the Support, Security and Satis-
faction of Virtue. Whatever Habits we
carry with us out of this World, will
doubtless, as far as the Mind is concerned,
be fixed for ever. They will naturally
gain Strength, and be always increasing;
but we have no Ground to suppose or ex-
pect any other Alteration. It must needs
therefore be of the utmost Consequence,
in this present State of Probation and Dis-
cipline, that we adorn and enrich our Minds
with virtuous Habits of all Kinds. 'Tis utterly
impossible that our Time and Pains should
be employed to such good Purpose any
other Way. This is laying up Treasures
incorruptible and immortal. Every vir-
tuous Habit may be considered as *a Pearl*
of great Price; as a Possession really in-
estimable.

SERM. estimable. Every Purchase we make of
XIV. this Kind will, in the strictest Sense, prove
a Perpetuity, and be unalienably secured.
No Force or Fraud can ever break into it;
and even Death and Time will have no
Power over it. In like manner every such
Habit will always yield, in Proportion,
real Happiness, and clear Enjoyment.
Temporal Possessions are oftentimes of no
other Use to Men, than to gratify their
Humours, and sooth their Imaginations;
but these spiritual ones penetrate the very
Substance of the Soul, and produce the
most solid Joy and Satisfaction. They
exalt and perfect its Powers, and qualify
it more and more for the noblest Enjoy-
ments.

Upon the Whole, our Provision and
Preparation here, consists, as we have seen,
in right Affections, good Actions, and vir-
tuous Habits: Hereon much depends in
this Life; and in the next, our All. A
sensual vicious Course of Life, as it ex-
poses Men to the Indignation of Heaven,
so by a kind of natural Necessity it sinks
them into Misery and Perdition. The
genuine Fruits of Sin are Shame, and Sor-
row, and Self-contempt; great Trouble
and Disappointment here, and extreme
Woe,

Woe, Tribulation, and Anguish here-SERM.
after. But Virtue yields true Peace and XIV.
Comfort in Hand, and immortal Joys and 
Glories in Reversion. The Value of its
Improvements is really greater than can
be expressed or conceived. — While our
Eyes are blinded with the Dust of this
World, it may be difficult to make us
see clearly this Truth. But when Death
shall have shifted the Scene, and drawn
the Curtain, we shall not fail then to be
thoroughly convinced. The Allurements
of Sense will no longer deceive us, nor the
Pomps of Life dazzle us : On the contrary,
we shall despise the empty Glitter, and be
apt to look down with Disdain on the mean
Pursuits and little Occupations of mortal
Men. The Gifts and Graces of Religion
will then appear in their full Lustre, and
the Worth of them be well understood.
Compared with earthly Things, the Dif-
ference will be found immensely great ;
and we shall see, and be ashamed, how
weakly we once judged, and how foolishly
we disposed of our Affections. In short,
one virtuous Improvement shall be ac-
counted of more Value than all the Treas-
ures upon Earth.—Most highly then does
it concern us to cultivate our Powers, and
make

SERM. make a right Use of our present Opportunities. *The Fashion of this World passeth away*, and our Continuance in it is but momentary in Comparison of the next. There then must lie our main Interest, and thither ought we to direct our chief Aim, and our principal Endeavours. That when this transient State is ended, we may be received into everlasting Habitations, where there shall be Fulness of Joy, and Perfection of Felicity for evermore.



S E R M O N XV.

Propagation of the Gospel.

*Occasioned by a publick Collection for the
Propagation of the Gospel, &c.*

GALAT. Ch. VI. Ver. 10.

*As we have therefore Opportunity, let us do
Good unto all Men, especially unto them
who are of the Household of Faith.*

THE general Obligations of do-
ing Good are so obvious, clear, and strong; so deeply planted
in human Nature, and so closely
interwoven in our Frame; so familiar to
our Understandings; and so intimate to
our Affections; that it seems almost im-
possible we should be ignorant of them, or
not

SERM.
XV.

SERM. not even feel the Force of them every
XV. Hour. But the Misfortune is, though Na-
ture prompts to universal Good-Will, and
the Author of Nature strictly requires it,
we are apt to contract this generous Dis-
position, and confine it within a very small
Compass. Though the true Object of our
Benevolence be our whole Species, *all*
Men without Exception or Limitation;
yet how common is it to circumscribe our
Favours and good Offices either with in our
own Walls, or within our own Pale?
That is, to limit our Beneficence either to
Those of our own Household, or *Those of our*
own religious Persuasion. Whatever Op-
portunities they may have of going farther,
many seem to think it sufficient, if they
promote the Welfare of their own Kindred,
and provide for those whom they look up-
on as Parts of themselves. But surely it
ought to be considered, whether this be
not a great Abuse of natural Affection. For
though by powerful Instincts, and Princi-
ples of all Kinds, Men are strongly bound
to go thus far; and whoever neglect this
necessary Duty, are pronounced by the A-
postle *worse than Infidels*; yet they will
find themselves very deficient if they stop
here, when it is fairly in their Power to
proceed

proceed, and to extend their Kindness and SERM.
 Charity to many others. Such a Degree XV.
 of Selfishness, as it may justly be called, is
 manifestly repugnant to the Law of Na-
 ture; which plainly condemns all Narrow-
 ness of Spirit, and requires Men to be open-
 hearted and communicative according to
 their Power. As endeavouring to do Good
 is the very Essence of Virtue, so to extend
 and diffuse that Good as widely as possible
 is, in reality, the Perfection of Virtue. All
 Moralists allow that nothing conduces so
 much to bring Men to a Resemblance of
 the all-perfect Being; whose Favours are
 infinite, and his Goodness without Bounds.
 And if this be the Voice of Nature and
 Reason, Christianity speaks still plainer
 and louder. Contracted Benevolence, and
 a selfish Conduct, are directly opposite to
 the whole Tenor of the New Testament;
 which every where inculcates an open
 Heart, and a publick Spirit. *Christian
 Charity seeketh not her own*; otherwise than
 in Subservience and Subordination to the
 common Good. Our blessed Saviour ne-
 ver aimed to weaken natural Affection; ne-
 ver meant to dissolve or diminish dome-
 stick Obligations; however he might pro-
 pose to regulate them, and reduce them

SERM. to their just Bounds. Nevertheless his

XV. Doctrine it was, and earnestly he taught it
upon all Occasions, that private Regards
must ever give way to publick Welfare;
and that the Good-will of his Disciples
must be unconfined and universal as his
own. Accordingly we find *the Love of our
Neighbour* pronounced by him one of the
two *great Commandments*, and by the A-
postle emphatically stiled *the Royal Law*.
And if we inquire *who is our Neighbour*,
our Lord himself has given an Answer at
large; and the Scope of it is, that *He is*
our Neighbour, whoever he be, or where-
ever he live, who stands in need of our
Help, and wants a Kindness fairly in our
Power. The *good Samaritan* was no Kins-
man, no Friend of the wounded *Jew*; so
far from it, that, as a *Samaritan*, he was
a bitter Enemy to all *Jews*. But he was
too generous, too humane, to think of
Enmity at such a Time, and on such an
Occasion. It was enough for him, that
he saw a Man in deep Distress, and ready
to perish; when at the same time he found
it in his own Power to relieve and save him.
Good-Nature at least, truly so called,
prompted him to overlook all other Con-
siderations, and fly to the Assistance of so
miserable

miserable an Object. — This pathetick SERM.
 Parable farther instructs us, that no Dif- XV.
 ference of Opinion, or Diversity of Religi-
 on, can ever release Men from the Obligations of Humanity: A Point wherein Instruction, or Admonition, is greatly wanted. For what more common, as I before took Notice, than the Confinement of their Affections and good Offices within the Precincts of their own Religion, or the Pale of their own Communion? How very charitable are several Sects to People of their own Persuasion, and how regardless of the rest of Mankind? But surely they do not well understand *what Spirit they are of*. Would any Man know what the Gospel says to such a Proceeding? He need only consult the fore-mentioned Parable. For what Disagreement could be more obstinate, what Disaffection more violent, than those between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*? Insomuch that we read they had *no Dealings* with each other. But nothing of this Nature could restrain the kind *Samaritan*. However he might partake of the Prejudices or Animosities of his Country; they now slept quietly in his Breast, and he sacrificed them all to his Benevolence and Compassion. — Excepting there-

SERM. fore the Want of Ability, or a fit Opportunity, nothing can exempt us from the
 XV. general Obligation of doing Good. And well may we consider it is unlimited and universal, when we find it includes even those who are looked upon as irreconcilable Enemies.

But though Christian Charity is to be thus extended to *all Men*, yet my Text, we see, allows, and even requires a peculiar Regard to *the Household of Faith*. And the Reason is obvious and unexceptionable. That strong Instinct, that special Care and Concern which every Man feels for the Interests of his own Family, whence arise they, and to what Principle are they to be ascribed? Without Doubt to Nearness of Relation, and Proximity of Blood; that *natural Bond of Union*, which has been held sacred and inviolable by all Nations, and in all Ages. Conformably hereto, Christians are peculiarly attached to *them who are of the Household of Faith*. And this Attachment is founded on the *spiritual Relation* interceding among them. If *Men* are all Brethren and Fellow-Subjects in God's Kingdom, *Christians* are moreover Fellow-Members of Christ's Family. Hence arises a new Brotherhood;
 apt

apt to produce correspondent Regards, SERM.
and suitable Affections. *As there is one* XV.
God and Father of all, so there is one Lord,
one Faith, and one Baptism, as the Apostle
takes Notice; and hence we are pronoun-
ced *one Body in Christ, and every one Mem-*
bers one of another. Being thus more close-
ly, and with singular Ties and Ligaments,
united to our Fellow-Christians, they are
consequently entitled to a fixed Pre-emi-
nence; and are, upon all fit Occasions, to
be considered, served, and favoured ac-
cordingly. To regard them as our spiri-
tual Kindred is not enough; they are our
Brethren in a more exalted Sense, and the
Whole are collectively described as *one*
Fold under one Shepherd. Agreeably to
this Rule, and this Relation, the primitive
Christians stedfastly practised; exchanging
good Offices, and communicating to each
other as freely and affectionately, as if
they had been all near Kindred, and li-
terally belonged to the same Household.
In short, they lived and loved in such a
Manner, as charmed a Multitude of Spec-
tators, and excited the Envy and Admi-
ration of the Heathens round about them.

Another Particular specified in my Text,
is the Circumstance of Time and Occa-

SERM. fion. *As ye have Opportunity, do Good*
 XV. unto all Men, &c. Opportunities of doing Good partly arise from the Abilities of the Agent, and partly from the Fitness of the Object and the Occasion. Be the Object never so fit, and the Occasion never so just; still every Man's Opportunities must depend on his Condition and Circumstances. Where Power is wanting, Men may be Friends and Well-wishers, but no Benefactors. And where Power is small, the Obligation cannot exceed its Proportion. Concerning this Point, the general Rule is obvious and plain. *Be merciful after thy Power*, says an Apocryphal Author. *If thou hast much, give plentifully: If thou hast little, do thy Diligence gladly to give of that little: For so gatherest thou thyself a good Reward in the Day of Necessity.* — To Persons of full Fortunes and large Abilities, fit Objects of Charity, and proper Occasions of Beneficence are seldom wanting. And where the Will is answerable to the Power, the Consequence must needs be happy both to Givers and Receivers. The Calls and Demands of Charity, are indeed more numerous and frequent than is to be wished. But what can we conclude from hence, except the
 Ne-

Neceſſity of diſtinguiſhing? For without SERM.
Question there is, and always muſt be a XV.
conſiderable Difference. Some Occaſions
are more urgent and preſſing; ſome Op-
portunities more peculiarly inviting. And
if we ſuppoſe *that*, an Account whereof
has now been laid before us, to be of this
Number; ſurely we have good Authority
for ſo doing. Our Superiors, we find,
both in Church and State conſider it as
ſuch: And indeed, had they not viewed
it in this Light, and judged it of great and
preſſing Importance, we have good Rea-
ſon to preſume it would have been poſt-
poned. But it is not merely Authority,
by which we are to be influenced in this
Affair. We are not only permitted, but
required to examine the Caſe, weigh the
Facts, and ſearch into the Grounds and
Reaſons of this publick Contribution.
This done, we ſhall readily perceive that
few Occaſions of doing Good, few chari-
table Demands, are either of equal Mo-
ment, or equal Merit.

Let it then be conſidered, that the moſt
excellent Charities muſt needs be thoſe
which yield the nobleſt Fruits, and pro-
duce the greateſt and moſt durable Good.
From whence it follows, that the beſt

SERM. Office which can be done to our Fellow-

XV. Creatures is to promote the Improvement
of their Minds. No other Benefit can

turn to equal Account, or conduce so effectually to their true Welfare. Outward Goods and bodily Advantages have indeed their Value; but how small and transient is it in Comparison of the other? Knowledge, Wisdom, Virtue, and Religion are immortal Gifts, as conferring on the Soul not only present Comfort and solid Enjoyment, but enriching it for ever! And how can either Humanity or Charity rise higher, than by contributing to the Production of such glorious Effects? To instruct the Ignorant, soften the Untractable, civilize the Rude, and reclaim the Vicious, are Designs truly laudable, and such as do Honour to human Nature.—

But how, and by what Means they are to be accomplished? By none sooner, or more effectually than the *Propagation of the Gospel*. By conveying and spreading this glorious Light among them that *sit in Darkness*, and are otherwise destitute of the Means of Grace, and the Promise of Immortality. How equitable, how fitting, to communicate, as we have Opportunity, those spiritual Blessings which, through
God's

God's Goodness, we ourselves have so long SERM.
enjoyed? What Undertaking more wor- XV.
thy, than to cultivate the Minds of fierce
Barbarians, and break wild Savages into
Men and Christians? If without Relief,
and without Remedy, many of them
groan under a wretched Servitude (a Hard-
ship much to be lamented, to say the least)
yet in God's Name let them not want, if
we can hinder it, the Freedom of Reli-
gion, and the Liberty of the Gospel. If
they must be Slaves to their Fellow-Crea-
tures, and even to Christians; let them
not however serve Idols, or worship the
Devil. Let us endeavour to procure them
one Day in seven, for the Refreshment of
their Bodies, and the Edification of their
Souls; and however small their Hopes
and Enjoyments may be in this World,
yet let them not despair of Happiness in
another.—I am not pleading the Cause of
these Wretches merely on the Foot of *Hu-*
manity, or *Charity*. They have in *Equity*,
another and a further Claim to our Assist-
ance. The whole Lives of a Multitude
of *Negroes* are spent, hardly and severely
spent, in promoting our Wealth and Pros-
perity. And since they minister thus to
our *temporal* Advantages, let us not grudge
3 them

SERM. them a *spiritual* Recompense : Perhaps the
XV. only Return that is in our Power to make
them. This Benefit, great as it is, seems
designed them by Providence ; and perhaps
it is further designed that they are to receive it from our Hands. — Had it been agreeable to the Wisdom of Providence, and the Constitution of God's Government, the Light of the Gospel had doubtless been spread, in the same miraculous Manner, quite round the Globe. But He saw fit to make Use of different Means and Measures. As the Laws of Nature, so the Dispensations of Grace are carried on by the Instrumentality of second Causes, and the Mediation of Men. Hereby, not to seek for any other Reasons, they are knit together, and their Interests united in the strongest Manner. The Communication of Truth, whether civil or religious, by human Instruction, produces new Relations, and new Obligations ; and thereby tends to draw the Bands of Society closer and faster.—Since then the Christian Religion is now to be supported and spread by ordinary Means, and mere human Endeavours ; let us not presume to evade the Duty by calling for new Inspiration, or expecting Miracles. How shall we answer
it

it to our Redeemer, if we no way contri-
bute to the Advancement of his King-
dom, and the Propagation of his Truth? SERM.
XV.

If on every Occasion we appear unconcerned about the Honour of his Name, the Extent of his Authority, and the Progress of his Gospel? — Shall the Romish Church send her Missionaries far and wide, East and West in great Numbers, to plant her Errors, and circulate her Corruptions; while the pure Doctrines of Protestantism wither and die for want of Nourishment?

If her *Zeal* be *not according to Knowledge*, must we therefore be quite lukewarm?

In vain do we boast of pure Doctrines, and genuine Christianity, while we are deficient in Gratitude and Piety. I may add common Charity; for if the Gospel be really a Blessing to Mankind, who sees not that it ought to be communicated and spread as far as may be? — Besides, in the Case before us, it is not only our Duty, but even our Interest: I mean our secular Interest; if the Benefit of the Publick be considered as our own. The further Christianity prevails, and the deeper it is rooted in our *Indian* Territories, the fairer Prospect we have of being well and faithfully served. For as it directly tends

to

SERM. to promote Industry and Sobriety, Fidelity

XV. ty and Justice; mere Policy may prompt us to desire and endeavour the Propagation of the Gospel.—But how can we expect such Effects from it abroad, if we find them not at home? Here the Gospel has firm Footing, and the Benefit of an Establishment; and yet the foregoing Virtues are often found wanting among us. This is true; alas! too true: But it is no just Objection to what has been said. Considering the Corruption and Degeneracy of Mankind, it is not to be imagined that any religious Institution, however pure and perfect, should make all Men virtuous. If we Christians are faulty, without Christianity we should be much worse: And if any Man say the contrary, he either knows not, or cares not, what he affirms. 'Tis certainly sufficient for the present Argument, that the Christian Religion does good Service where it prevails; and would do much more, if we would give it Leave. If indeed there was any Force in this Ojection, nothing could stand before it; it would overturn every thing. It might as well be urged, that the Lights of Heaven are useless, because many Men go astray, and do Works
of

of Darkness in the Face of the Sun.—In SERM.
short, the Depravities of Mankind are con- XV.
fessedly very strong: But it is no more
Objection to the Light of the Gospel, than
it is to the Light of the Day, that we often
make an ill Use of both.

But to return, if the latter Part of my
Text be more agreeable than the former,
if we had rather *do Good to them who are*
of the Household Faith, than contribute to
the Conversion of Infidels; the present
Opportunity equally suits our Purpose. For
a *Household of Faith* we have abroad, and
even *spiritual Plantations* in divers Places:
Which, in order to produce valuable
Fruits, want nothing but the Support and
Encouragement of well-disposed Chris-
tians. This indeed is their only Fund;
and if it sometimes fail and fall short, all
things considered, we need not wonder.
It has laid a Foundation, and built there-
on, from Time to Time, to excellent
Purpose. By the Blessing of Heaven it
has increased and prospered; produced
Schools and Seminaries of Learning and
Religion, and annually maintained not on-
ly them, but a regular Ministry, for the
Instruction of the People, and the Cele-
bration of Divine Worship. The Society
in-

SERM. incorporated for these good Ends, has
 XV. spared no Pains in the Pursuit and Promotion of them; and when their Disbursements exceeded their charitable Incomes, they have been supplied by publick Collections. And this is the present Aim and Design of his Majesty's gracious Letter which we have now heard, together with those of our Metropolitan and Diocesan. A Design truly pious, and beneficial beyond Exception. A Design perfectly disinterested, clear of all selfish and sinister Motives, and wherein Party and Faction can have no Concern. As sure as the Gospel is of Divine Authority, this Charity is and must be commendable and Good; and whoever is really a Friend to the former, cannot fail of wishing well to the latter. Against which it can be no easy Matter to find a Cavil: It may seem sufficient to silence Irreligion itself, and even strike Avarice dumb.

Upon the Whole, if it be our Duty to do Good either to them who profess the Gospel, or to them who are Strangers to it; to instruct the Ignorant, or reform the Licentious; the Obligation before us seems hard to be resisted. In like manner, if it be our Interest that our *American Colonies*

nies thrive and flourish; and in Order SERM.
thereto, that the Inhabitants be encourag- XV.
ed, the Natives cherished, and the Negroes
comforted; our Concurrence must be also
due on a national Account. So that whe-
ther we consider ourselves as Members of
our religious, or civil Community; as
Christians, or *Britons*; no Inducements,
no Excitements imaginable seem to be
wanting.

That merciless Nation which first discovered these remote Regions, and like Beasts of Prey carried Terror, and Slaughter, and Desolation, whithersoever they went; which under the heavenly Banner of Truth and Peace, concealed the most horrible Iniquity, and hellish Cruelty; are to be considered by us, I need not say, not as Precedents, for of that there is little Danger; but as a Tribe of Usurpers, Robbers, Tyrants; who committed such monstrous Indignities, and perfidious Outrages in this Part of the World, as have not only dishonoured Religion, and brought an Odium there on the Christian Name, but even fixed Shame and Scandal on human Nature itself.—That Odium and this Scandal let us endeavour to wipe away, as far as lies in our Power. Let the injured

SERM. injured Natives find, or at least their De-
XV. scendants, how great a Difference there is
between sincere Professors of the Gospel,
and *Wolves in Sheeps Cloathing*; between
peaceable Possessors, and ravenous Inva-
ders; in a Word, between Light and
Darkness, pure Religion and Popery. *Let*
our Light so shine before these Men, that
they may see our good Works, and glorify
our Father which is in Heaven. Let them
observe the *Wisdom of the Serpent* sweeten-
ed with the *Innocence of the Dove*; and in
all their Dealings with us, be treated as
we should wish to have been, had we
been born *Americans*.

Whatever be the Effect of any present
or future Endeavours, of this we are as-
sured from unerring Authority, that *the*
everlasting Gospel shall hereafter be *preach-*
ed to every Nation, and every People, and
the Sound of it be heard over the Face of
the whole Earth. *The Kingdoms of this*
World shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord,
and his Word be *a Witness unto all Nations.*
But when, or in what Manner this will
be accomplished, is not revealed; neither
is it needful for us to know. What more
concerns us is, that *as we have Opportuni-*
ty, we are bound to promote this great
Event.

Event. If we are regardless of such Opportunities, and refuse to give any Testimonies of our Good-will; must not our Consciences accuse us of being merely *nominal* Christians? If we are *real* ones, how can we be quite unconcerned in any Instance, on any Occasion, which affects the Service of God, and the Honour of Christianity? Supposing this our Case, the Time will surely come, when we shall lament our Insensibility, and the Hardness of our Hearts; and wish we had testified our Concurrence in such a Cause, and our Approbation of such a Work. On the other Hand, if we endeavour, according to our Abilities, to support and encourage these pious Labours, and are desirous of spreading *the incorruptible Seed*; this will yield us Consolation at the Time when we shall most want it, and be plenteously rewarded at the last Day.

I shall only add, that the rudest *Indian*, the meanest and most ignorant *Slave* in all our Plantations, however despicable in our Eyes, yet bear an Image which renders them precious in the Sight of their Redeemer. *Their* Redeemer, I say, lest this Circumstance should happen to be forgotten, or called in Question. He died for

SERM. *them* as well as for *us*, and will own their

XV. Relation to him expresly and publickly at

his second Coming. We are further to take Notice, that whatever Good, whatever Kindness is done to them, will be accepted by him as done to himself. Both these Points are evident from our Saviour's own memorable Words, with which I shall conclude; *Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.*



P R E F A C E

T O T H E

Following Six Sermons,

When first Published.

 *I* seems to be the fixed Sentiment, and Resolution of some Christians, if Revealed Religion could not, or should not, be effectually supported, to let Natural Religion sink with it. An Expedient, if I mistake not, as rash and desperate, as it would be for a Man, deprived of certain great and valuable Privileges, to throw up his Life along with them. Let it be supposed, (for a mere Supposition it is, and I am fully persuaded, ever will be) that Christianity should fail, and be disproved: Would the Consequence be fatal to all Religion? Would all natural Principles become incredible, or worthless? It may safely be affirmed, and easily proved neither the one, nor the other. On which Account the forementioned Determination is Matter of Surprise, as well as Concern—I see not indeed how it is to be reconciled either with

X 2

Christian

P R E F A C E.

Christian Charity, or common Humanity. If some Men cannot be satisfied with the Evidences of Revelation, or will not duly attend to them; shall we therefore be so cruelly officious, as to band them down into the Depths of Irreligion and Atheism? God forbid. On the contrary, till their Minds be more open to Conviction, let them be exhorted and assisted to hold fast those Principles which they do acknowledge; and which are indeed the Fundamentals of all Religion. Whoever sincerely believes a God, a Providence, and a Future State, is surely much more susceptible of Christianity, than he who is destitute of these essential Principles. It may therefore be proposed and recommended to the former with much greater Hopes of Success. In the one Case, we have only a Superstructure to raise on firm Foundations; in the other we must either dig very deep, or build on a Quicksand.—On these, and several other Accounts, I apprehend, no Man can be misemployed, who contributes, even in the lowest Degree, to the Establishment or Illustration of Truths so greatly and universally momentous.

S E R-



S E R M O N X V I.

The Folly and Wretchedness of
an Atheistic Inclination.

P S A L X I V. Part of the first Verse.

*The Fool hath said in his Heart there is
no God.*



OF all the false Doctrines, and SERM.
foolish Opinions, which ever XVI.
infested the Mind of Man, no-
thing can possibly equal that
of Atheism; which is such a monstrous
Contradiction to all Evidence, to all the
Powers of Understanding, and the Dic-
tates of common Sense, that it may well be
questioned, whether any Man can really
fall into it by a deliberate Use of his Judg-
ment. —All Nature so clearly points out,
and so loudly proclaims, a Creator of
infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness;

SERM. that whoever hears not its Voice, and sees

XVI.

not its Proofs, may well be thought wilfully deaf, and obstinately blind. If it be evident, self-evident to every Man of Thought, that there can be no Effect without a Cause; what shall we say of that manifold Combination of Effects, that Series of Operations, that System of Wonders which fill the Universe; which present themselves to all our Perceptions, and strike our Minds and our Senses on every Side! Every Faculty, every Object of every Faculty, demonstrates a Deity. The meanest Insect we can see, the minutest and most contemptible Weed we can tread upon, is really sufficient to confound Atheism, and baffle all its Pretensions. How much more that astonishing Variety and Multiplicity of God's Works with which we are continually surrounded! Let any Man survey the Face of the Earth, or lift up his Eyes to the Firmament; let him consider the Natures and Instincts of brute Animals, and afterwards look into the Operations of his own Mind: Will he presume to say, or suppose, that all the Objects he meets with are nothing more than the Result of unaccountable Accidents, and blind Chance?

Can

Can he possibly conceive that such wonderful Order should spring out of Confusion? Or that such perfect Beauty should be ever formed by the fortuitous Operations of unconscious, unactive Particles of Matter? As well, nay better and more easily might he suppose, that an Earthquake might happen to build Towns and Cities; or the Materials carried down by a Flood fit themselves up, without Hands into a regular Fleet. For what are Towns, Cities or Fleets, in comparison of the vast and amazing Fabrick of the Universe!—In short the Principle spoken of in my Text offer such Violence to all our Faculties, that it seems scarce credible it should ever really find any Footing in human Understanding.

But is it not there expressly ascribed to the foolish Man, and represented as his Opinion; which though perhaps he may not think to speak out, he whispers to himself, and *says it in his Heart*? But these Words, for a Reason already given, seem to require another Construction; and will, I believe, fairly admit of it; for the *Heart* of Man is generally represented in Scripture as the Seat of his Affections, rather than of his Judgment.

SERM.

XVI.

Conformably whereto, the Expression in my Text may denote, not the Man's real Opinion or Persuasion, but his Inclination and Desire. He secretly wishes that there was no God, and endeavours to draw his Belief that Way as much as he can.—If the Words be thus understood, as they well may, the Subject arising from them will be the extreme Folly and Madness of so desperate a Wish, either in respect of the Publick or of Himself.

To wish against the Being of a God is to wish Mankind the greatest Mischief and Distress that can possibly be conceived. It is to wish away the grand Support and Security of human Society, and to overturn the Foundations of all Trust, Faith, and Confidence between Man and Man. Was there no Awe of a Supreme Being, no Terrors of a Future Judgment to restrain us, what Government upon Earth would be able to maintain itself, or find Protection for it's Subjects? Injuries and Outrages, Fraud and Falshood, would prevail and spread far and wide, and the Iniquities of Mankind know no Bounds.—What wise Man would chuse, or even dare to live in a Community of Atheists, if such a one could be found? Let us for the present

sent suppose such a one, and that it sub-
sisted under an advantageous and well-
chosen Form of Government. How loose
and precarious nevertheless would be the
Obligations both of the Governors, and
the Governed? The one ruling, and the
other submitting, not *in the Fear of God*,
but only in the Fear of each other: The
one unawed by any Apprehensions of
an invisible Power, which might call
them to an Account for Male-admini-
stration; the other obeying not *for Con-*
science Sake, but from a Principle of
Wrath and civil Punishment.—But is not
Virtue amiable, and worthy, and even
beneficial in its own Nature? And as
such, might it not influence, and incline,
and oblige the very Atheists themselves?
Let these Points be, in some Measure,
acknowledged; What follows? The prob-
able Welfare of such a Community, and
the Safety and Prevalence of their Go-
vernment? By no means; as will be shewn
very speedily. But let us first go on to
observe that, on the present Supposition,
that great Bond of Fidelity, that princi-
pal Guard and Support of Life and Pro-
perty, an Oath could have no Place at
all. That solemn Appeal to Heaven, for
the

SERM.
XVI.

SERM. the Confirmation of Evidence, the Deci-
 XVI. sion of Controversy, and the Prevention of
 Strife, would be thus a quite groundless
 and impossible Thing. And how wretched,
 how deplorable would be the Condition of
 Mankind, was there no God for guilty
 Men to fear, or honest Men to invoke!
 No almighty and all-righteous Governor
 to protect Innocence, encourage Virtue,
 and controul the Insolence of licentious
 Men.—There would indeed be left the
 Sword of the Civil Magistrate; and very
 great Occasion there would be for it: But
 yet it would be, in a great Measure use-
 less for want of Direction. For how
 should Evil-doers in this Case be con-
 victed? No Evidence could be sworn,
 excepting in the Magistrate's Name; who
 might perhaps be deified for that Pur-
 pose; but unless he could also be vested
 with a Power of searching Mens Hearts,
 such an Expedient must be altogether
 fruitless. In order therefore to convict
 Criminals, would it be proper and safe to
 examine Evidence unsworn, and lay the
 whole Strefs of every Cause on Mens
 bare Words? Supposing the World with-
 out a Supreme Governor, this Rule might
 unavoidably take place; but every one
 must

must see how fatal the Consequence would SERM.
prove to all Societies. For, on that Sup- XVI.
position, how small a Number of Man-
kind would deserve to be trusted? The
Credit even of the fairest Characters
would be very precarious; and as to the
Generality, they would follow their se-
veral Humours and Interests without Re-
morse or Controul.—Again; the Restraints
of the Civil Magistrate would be insuf-
ficient on another Account. For with-
out Question there are many dark Frauds,
and secret Villanies that cannot fall under
his Cognizance. In all such Cases Men
must either be restrained by the Authority
of their own Consciences or not at all. And
what Authority, what Power could Con-
science have, were all Apprehensions of
a Deity removed and set aside? Consi-
dered as God's Vicegerent, it is indeed,
and well may be, a powerful Principle,
But according to the Fool's impious Wish
recorded in my Text, the Force of it
would be diminished and dwindled almost
to nothing.—However lovely, and beau-
tiful, and beneficial, Virtue may be in
itself; and however odious, deformed, and
destructive, Vice is in its own Nature;
yet considering the known Corruptions
and

SERM. and Depravations of Mankind, these Considerations would by no means suffice to
XVI. keep them in Order, and secure the Peace of the World, without a sovereign Legislator, and the prevailing Sanctions of Reward and Punishment, To be directed merely by the Rules of Right Reason, and influenced by the Charms of Virtue alone, requires great Integrity of Mind, a more excellent Disposition, and perhaps a more elegant and refined Taste, than can ever be expected from the Bulk of Mankind. They are all capable of being moved by Hopes and Fears; by the Apprehensions of final Happiness and Misery; but the Attractions of moral Beauty, and virtuous Excellence, can have very little Effect on any but Men of Honour and Probity, and indeed a superior Turn of Mind. And even in respect of these, mere unsupported Virtue must be very weak and uncertain, in comparison of that which is accompanied with Religion, and connected with it. We plainly see, degenerate as the World is, that innumerable Disorders are prevented by the Authority of Parents, Masters, and Magistrates; without which all Societies would soon be subverted, and human Life become a mere Scene of Riot, Rapine,

Rapine, and Confusion. And if such SERM.
small Clans and Communities of Men XVI.
stand in such need of *Superiors* and Go-
vernors, does not the Care and Conduct
of the whole require a *Supreme*? Human
Authority, however it may restrain out-
ward Actions, yet cannot take hold of
Mens Consciences. This can only be
done by the great Searcher of Hearts. And
yet without it all the Governments upon
Earth would be very superficial, and of
small Force. We find in Fact, how fre-
quently and familiarly Men break asun-
der the very Bonds of Religion, strong
as they are: How much greater Lengths
then would they run without Religion?
Who can imagine that the Generality of
Mankind could be held in any tolerable
Order by the Beauty of Virtue, or the
Ties of Honour? These might in some
measure prevail with a few select Spirits;
at least while nothing appeared in Oppo-
sition to them: But in the Day of fierce
Tryal, and strong Temptation, it is not
to be supposed that any Man's Integrity
should be able to bear up without the Sup-
ports of Religion.—In short, without the
Belief of a Deity, Society could not sub-
sist; or if it did, it would be worse than
any

SERM. any Solitude. As no Government upon
 XVI. Earth could answer the Purpose of its In-
 stitution, so the principal Blessings and
 Comforts of Life would be utterly de-
 stroyed. No Man could safely rely either
 on his Fellow-Creatures, or himself; but
 mutual Jealousies and universal Suspicions
 would produce endless Divisions, Conten-
 tions, and Animosities, to the total Sub-
 version of every thing good and desirable
 in Life.

But further; abstracting from Society and
 Government, we may go on to consider
 how the Minds and Conditions of private
 Persons would be affected by the Suppo-
 sition of a forlorn and fatherless World.
 Under the Tuition and Government of
 infinite Wisdom and Goodness, every thing
 appears with a comfortable Aspect. Men
 never need to want the purest Comforts,
 and most perfect Satisfaction, while *God*
is their Portion. From Him cometh, not
only every good and perfect Gift which
 we possess at present; but those pleasing
 Hopes, and joyful Prospects, which sweet-
 en the Cares and Toils of Life, and lye
 at the Bottom of all our Enjoyments. On
 this Account, whether the World frown
 or smile, the wise Man is neither highly
 trans-

transported, nor deeply dejected. What-SERM.
ever be his Lot, the Peace of his Mind XVI.
is secured, and his Heart at rest. For
his Hopes are founded on a Rock, and
his Treasure fixed where nothing can
touch it.—But, on the other Hand, the
atheistic Scheme reverses every thing;
blackens the whole Face of Nature, and
involves human Life in Darknefs and
Despair. Its better Things would yield
no Contentment, and its worse admit of
no Consolation: Or, in other Words,
Adversity would be insupportable, and
Prosperity joyless. Prosperity did I call
it? The Word is improper, and the Thing
impossible on this mad Supposition. With-
out a God, a Providence, and a Future
State, there could be no such Thing as
Prosperity, no Satisfaction, no real En-
joyment for Rational Beings; nor even any
true Peace and Tranquility of Mind.
No Affluence, no Variety of Worldly
Goods would be capable of yielding any
Content to a thinking Man. He might
entertain himself as he could with secu-
lar Amusements; or stupify himself with
sensual Pleasures; but what might become
of his nobler and better Part? What Pro-
vision would there be for the *Man*?

SERM. Should he engage himself in the Con-
 XVI. templation of Truth? To what purpose, if
 he had nothing to expect beyond this
 Life? That one Truth, if it was a Truth,
 would spoil all the rest, and turn them
 into mere Dreams and Shadows. Should
 he then *apply his Heart to know Wisdom,*
 and practise Virtue? With what View
 could he endeavour to improve himself,
 to purify his Mind, and perfect his Na-
 ture, merely to prepare for the Grave, and
 fit himself for a State of Oblivion? Would
 any Man freight a Ship richly, in order
 to provide for a certain Shipwreck at the
 End of his Voyage? If it be alledged,
 that to aim at Virtue in such Circumstances
 would not be entirely lost Labour, on ac-
 count of its intrinsic Worth and Usefulness;
 it is readily granted. But alas! How faintly
 must it operate under such desperate Diffi-
 culties and Discouragements? And indeed,
 excluding the Comforts of Religion, and
 the Hopes of Futurity, no sort of Good
 could be rightly relished. Virtue itself
 would only be considered and chosen as
 an Opiate to sooth Mens Minds, and
 soften their Afflictions. And whatever
 Means were used, Man's Life would
 perpetually be overcast, and his Days pass
 on

on in one continued Gloom. The more SERM.
he possessed of Worldly Goods, and the XVI.
higher he rose in his Condition and Cir-
cumstances, the more obnoxious he would
be to the Fears of Death, and the Hor-
rors of utter Extinction. Whatever Ad-
vantages and Successes he met with would
only be the Mockeries of Fortune: Like
Prizes befalling a Man who lies under
the Sentence of a speedy Execution.

And since Atheism corrupts and poi-
sons Prosperity, what dismal Effects would
it produce in Adversity! Would it not im-
mediately turn Distress into Despair, and
Misery into Madness? An unhappy Mor-
tal deep sunk in Troubles and Misfor-
tunes, and struggling with innumera-
ble Hardships here upon Earth, and yet
destitute at the same time of a Protector
and a Patron in Heaven, is a Condition
not to be even imagined without Horror.
Let a Man be surrounded with Crosses
and Calamities; let him be attacked at
once by Want, Pain, Sickness, Sorrow,
and all the Varieties of Wretchedness;
while he is convinced that God governs
the World with perfect Wisdom and
Goodness, he never needs to want solid
Consolation. Whatever he may endure

SERM. for the present, he has, or may have, that
XVI. Fund of Hope in his Mind, that Relief
in his Eye, which are abundantly capable
of supporting him. But supposing him
void of this Hope, and that Relief; what
would he then be, and which Way would
he turn himself? If any one preached to
him the Fool's Doctrine in my Text,
would he be able to draw any Comfort
out of it? If we suppose him prevailed
on to drink of the Cup of Atheism; how
would it go down, or sit upon his Sto-
mach? Would it prove a powerful Cor-
dial, and enable him to bear up under the
Load that lay upon him? Alas! instead
of alleviating his Sorrows, it would be an
infinite Addition to them: Instead of yield-
ing him Patience and Comfort in his Di-
stress, it would be apt to confound all the
Powers of his Soul, and drive him to
Distraction. Doubtless every Man in Mi-
sery, if his Sufferings have not deprived
him of his Senses, must think of Atheism
with the utmost Regret, Detestation, and
Abhorrence; as it robs him of his only
Refuge, and leaves him destitute of all
possible Comfort. He will be so far from
saying in his Heart, or endeavouring to
persuade himself there is no God; that he
will

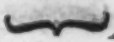
will naturally cry out with the Psalmist, SERM.
Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? Thou, XVI.
Lord, art my Rock, and my Fortrefs; my
strong Habitation, whereunto I may con-
tinually resort. When his Soul fainteth
within him, he will trust in the Name of
the Lord, and stay upon his God.

Upon the Whole, the Thought or Wish expressed in my Text, is certainly the blackest, most impious, and most execrable one, that ever entered into the Heart of Man. It may be looked upon as the Sum and Substance of all possible Curses; as comprehending universal Ruin. A Man had better, infinitely better, wish the Sun out of the Firmament, and all the Lights of Heaven extinguished for ever. For these are all inconsiderable in Comparison of the great Fountain of Light and Glory; who framed and fixed them in the Heavens for the Use of his Creatures, and who is ever able to enlighten us with them, or without them.

But perhaps it may be urged in Excuse or Extenuation of this mad Wish, this monstrous Inclination, that the foolish and wicked Man spoken of in my Text, takes it up, as it were in his own De-

SERM. fence. Conscious of his Sin and Guilt;
 XVI. he cannot but know that his vicious Conduct must highly have offended the righteous Governor of the World, if such a Governor there be; the Consequence of which is greatly to be dreaded. And though *Sentence against him be not executed speedily*, yet he knows that such a Delay is no Argument of Impunity. Hence he is led to wish in secret against God's Existence, and to persuade himself, as far as possibly he can, that it may only prove an imaginary Terror. And though the Proofs of the contrary are more numerous than the Sands on the Sea-shore, and clearer than the Sun at Noon-day; yet he shuts his Eyes, and darkens his Understanding, as well as he can; and thus perhaps deludes himself into some Degree of Atheism.

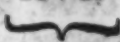
Supposing then this to be a just State of the Case, we may readily perceive the desperate Folly and Stupidity of such a Proceeding; and that upon these two Accounts: In the *first* Place, can the Nature of Things be any way altered by this Man's Wishes and Self-Delusions? If they cannot, which he certainly knows or may know on the least Reflection, what can he propose to

to gain by them? Should he be able to SERM.
silence or evade, in some Measure, the **XVI.**
Cries and Clamours of his Conscience; 
yet the grand Issue and Event of his Wick-
edness will be no way mended or mitigat-
ed thereby: On the contrary, it will be
rendered much worse. But, *Secondly*, as
he trusts to a fruitless and unprofitable
Expedient, so he fatally neglects the only
secure and effectual Way of retrieving his
Condition. Instead of wishing and strug-
gling against God's Existence, why does
he not endeavour, what in him lies, to
propitiate and pacify him? Is it not, in
all Respects, his best and wisest Course
heartily to repent and reform? Suppose
a Man engaged in a Rebellion against
his Prince, and accordingly apprehended
and convicted; what Means would he
use to extricate himself? Would he take
great Pains to suppose, and believe, that
there was really no such Man? Or would
he call in question his Title to the Crown?
Why neither. Men very seldom act so
stupidly in their secular Affairs. He would
instantly make Submission; acknowledge
his Crime, and promise inviolable Alle-
giance for the future. And why not the
same Method followed by Rebels against

SERM. Heaven? Is not the King of Kings as

XVI. placable and merciful as any earthly Prince?

 Nay, is he not infinitely more so? With him, sincere Repentance and Amendment is secure of a Pardon; though it often unavoidably fails and falls short with the other.—What Folly therefore, what Madness is it in the Sinner, however guilty, to amuse himself with idle Imaginations, and senseless Projects, instead of embracing the only safe and sure Means of Relief? To *say in his Heart there is no God*, is to give the Lye to his own Conscience, and to contradict the whole Works of Nature from Top to Bottom. And to wish there was *no God*, is the Wish of a Traytor, or a Madman; as including his own Ruin, and the Destruction of the whole World.—What he should have said, and what every wicked Man ought to say, is plainly this; there certainly is a God; I perceive it, and am assured of it, beyond all Possibility of Dispute. But this God is *good and gracious; plenteous in Mercy, full of Compassion; not willing that any should perish, but that the Wicked should turn from his way and live.* I will therefore address myself, with deep Humility and Contrition, to this merciful Judge; and endeavour

vour by a new Course of Life to render SERM.
myself an Object of his Favour and For- XVI.
giveness. 

Having thus briefly represented the heinous Wickedness, and horrid Extravagance of the Suggestion, or Wish, set forth in my Text; I shall only beg leave to add the following Remark, which naturally arises, and offers itself to our Thoughts, from what has been said.— If there be so great Folly and Impiety in cherishing Atheistic Principles, or wishing there was *no God*, how inexcusably foolish and criminal are those Men, who believe and acknowledge a God, and yet live as if there was none! Who own him in their Thoughts and Words, and yet *deny him in their Works*! Can any thing be more absurd, as well as audacious, than when a Man is thoroughly convinced of the Being and Perfections of the Divine Majesty, presuming to resist his Will, disregard his Authority, and confront the Laws of infinite Wisdom with the blind Counsels of his own Folly? Surely this is too daring, too desperate for Dust and Ashes. Shall such a Worm, such an Insect as Man, contend with Omnipotence, and act wilfully in Opposition and Defi-

SERM. ance to his Maker? Alas! the Fact, how-

XVI. ever strange, is notorious and common.

Though it be absolutely impossible Man should ever *harden himself against God, and prosper*; yet the Confidence of his own foolish Heart bears him up, and he rushes thoughtless into his own Perdition.—But supposing we do not suffer ourselves to sin with so high a Hand; yet how prone are we to neglect the Honour and Service confessedly due to the Divine Majesty? Neither *glorifying Him as God*, nor walking before Him with that filial Awe, and pious Reverence, which are plainly the bounden Duty of all Men, and doubly of Christians. To confess a Heavenly Father, a Supreme Lord of all Power and Perfection, and at the same time pretend it needless to worship Him; is contradicting a Man's own Perceptions, and falsifying what he feels within his own Breast. Will any Man be satisfied, who finds himself neglected or slighted by his Children and Servants? No; he sees it to be wrong in itself, as well as mischievous in its Consequences; and accordingly never fails to condemn and resent it. How comes it then to pass, that we behave in this very Manner towards our
common

common Parent and universal Master ? SERM.
 Is God the only Parent, the only Bene- XVI.
 factor, who may be disrespected and slight-
 ed by his ungrateful Children and Depen-
 dants ? The only becoming Answer to
 these Questions is Remorse, and Shame,
 and Confusion of Face. We are mani-
 festly self-condemned ; and there is no
 Room even for the least Shadow of an
 Excuse. — What remains then but that
 we rectify our Thoughts and Conceptions
 of the Supreme Being ; that we ever think
 and speak of Him, with all possible Re-
 verence ; that we strive to attain an uni-
 form Obedience to his sacred Will ; that
 we *worship Him devoutly in Spirit and*
Truth, and give Him the Glory due unto
his Name ; that we enter into his Gates
with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with
Praise : For on all Accounts He is worthy,
infinitely worthy, to receive Glory and Ho-
nour, and Adoration, now, henceforth, and
for evermore.



S E R M O N X V I I .

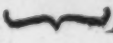
God's Government of the World,
a sure and most joyful Truth.

P S A L. X C V I I . Part of the 1st Verse.

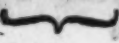
The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoyce.—

Or, according to the other Translation,
*The Lord is King, the Earth may be glad
thereof.*



O acknowledge a Deity, and yet S E R M.
suppose, as some of the Heathen X V I I .
Philosophers pretended to do, 
that He is altogether uncon-
cerned either in the Creation or Govern-
ment of the World, is owning him in
Words, and disowning him in Reality.
In like manner, to confess that God made
the World, and all Things therein, and
at

SERM. at the same Time deny his Care and Providence over it; is, in Effect, maintaining

 a God without Divine Attributes. It is maintaining inconsistent Opinions, and separating Things essentially united. As sure as there is a God, so sure it is that he must be supremely wise, and infinitely good. But to create the World, and then leave it to itself, and all the Confusion consequent thereupon, is a Conduct impossible to be reconciled with either of those Perfections. If our clearest Ideas are to be trusted, there would be no Wisdom, no Goodness at all in such a Procedure. For whatever Ends might be proposed in the Production of such a forlorn World, they might not possibly be answered. Neither the Creator's Glory, nor his Creatures Happiness, could be in any Measure accomplished without a Providence. And as to any other Intentions, we are not able to frame any Conception of them. However, they must needs likewise be ineffectual, and frustrate on the same Supposition.

But let us examine the Grounds of this important Doctrine somewhat more particularly and distinctly. Strictly speaking, the Creation necessarily requires the continued

tinued Influence and perpetual Support of SERM.
its Creator. The natural World could XVII.
not subsist a Moment without the Almighty 
Hand which first formed it. Should
God be pleased at any time to withdraw
his Power and Protection, all Nature must
sink in an Instant. Most certainly every
thing would immediately run to Ruin, and
probably fall to nothing. Both Reason
and Revelation assure us, that *by him all
Things consist.* That *He preserveth and
upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Pow-
er.* That *in his Hand is the Soul of every
living Thing, and the Breath of all Man-
kind:* And that *in Him we live, move, and
have our Being.* In this Respect there-
fore, God's Providence not only stands on
firm Foundations, and sure Evidence, but
appears absolutely necessary; since the
World could no more continue without
his Aid, than it could exist without it at
first. The great Machine of the Uni-
verse, so wonderfully framed and fitted as
it is, yet cannot go of itself; as unavoid-
ably depending on its Almighty Author,
and naturally requiring his Concurrence,
to keep it not only in Order, but in Be-
ing. Nor does this argue any Defect in
his Workmanship; because an independ-
dent

SERM. dent System of Creatures is not only absurd, but utterly impossible.

Nevertheless, it is not so much this, as another Branch of Divine Providence, that we are chiefly to understand by the Declaration in my Text. God superintends indeed the whole ; and governs the natural, as well as the moral World. All Creatures are subject to his Power and Rule, whether they be animate, or inanimate : But when his Reign, his Dominion, his *Kingdom* are spoken of ; we are primarily, if not peculiarly, to understand his Government of moral Agents, and rational Subjects. As these are his noblest Productions, and stand at the Top of the Creation, they must needs be the principal Objects of his Care and Providence. To direct mere Matter, and produce out of it so much Order and Convenience, so much Beauty and Variety, so much Symmetry and Proportion, requires doubtless great Power and Wisdom ; but to preside over the intellectual System, to rule not only the *Children of Men, and the Kingdom of the Earth*, but all *Angels, and Authorities, and heavenly Powers* ; such an Administration as this is Divine in the highest Sense ; and such a Kingdom most worthy of

a sure and most joyful Truth.

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of him, whose Power is boundless, and his SERM.
Understanding infinite: And who upon that XVII.
Account is *the only Potentate, King of Kings,*
and Lord of Lords.

But to proceed; this Kingdom of God, this Government of the moral World, being in a more especial manner the Doctrine of my Text, and indeed most expressly taught throughout the whole Scriptures, need not be more particularly proved from thence. Let us therefore briefly and impartially inquire how it appears to the Reason of our own Minds. — The Question then is, if it can be called so, whether God's Creatures, his intelligent Creatures, be under his Care, Protection, and Government; or whether they are wholly abandoned to their own Management, and given up to their own Guidance. If they be left to themselves, and the Government of the World is refused by the Maker of it; no other Account can possibly be given of the Thing, but that he either wanted Power or Inclination: Either was not able to execute this great Charge, or not willing. And if both these Suppositions are evidently false and groundless, the Consequence must be the Truth of the Proposition set forth in my Text.

— That

SERM. — That God neither did, nor could want
 XVII. Power to govern the World, is manifest
 even to Demonstration. For not to mention that Omnipotence is an essential Attribute of the Divine Nature, most certain it is, that he who was able to create the World, must much more be able to direct and govern it; Creation implying and requiring the highest of all Power. He who could raise the Universe from nothing, and fix it originally in the most exact Order, cannot possibly fail of full Power to preserve and regulate it. *He who planted the Ear, as the Psalmist observes, shall he not hear; he who formed the Eye, shall he not see?* Can any thing escape his Perception who inhabits Eternity and Infinity? Who vitally exists every where, and can be absent no where? And as nothing is unknown to him, so nothing is *impossible with him*. Nothing can *resist his Will*, or make the least Opposition to his Decrees. Omnipotence knows no Difficulties; but with the greatest Ease *accomplishes whatever it pleases, and subdueth all Things unto itself*. The whole Creation is full of this Truth; and every Object we meet with, proclaims the incomprehensible Power and Majesty of him that made it.

Since

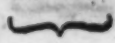
Since then it cannot be supposed, with-
out the greatest Contradiction to his Na-
ture, that God should be *unable* to govern
the World; we are next to consider whe-
ther he could be supposed *unwilling*. And
the Resolution of this Point will readily be
found. For whatever is most agreeable to
perfect Wisdom and Goodness, must in
this Case be Fact. Most infallibly God is
ever willing to determine, and do, what
is wisest and best. Can then any Man
think it agreeable to perfect Wisdom, that
God should be so regardless of the Works
of his Hands, as immediately to lay aside
all Care and Concern about them? That
he should make the World, and then for-
sake it as soon as he had made it? That
he should furnish and fit it up in the no-
blest Manner, and replenish it with an end-
less Variety of Inhabitants: That he should
produce innumerable Orders of Beings,
and Ranks of Creatures, many of them
formed after his own Divine Image; and
qualified for the Knowledge and Imitation
of himself; and when he had so done,
relinquish the whole; and give every Thing
up to Chance and Confusion? How can
such a Conduct as this be ascribed to
any wise Agent? And much less to in-
finite

SERM. finite Wisdom. For as we before observed,
XVII. whatever Ends or Intentions the Creator
proposed, they could never be accomplished
without his Direction and Concurrence.
— But perhaps it may be urged, that the
World was framed in such wonderful Order
and Perfection, as to stand in no further
Need of the Creator's Superintendence;
and that his rational Creatures were made
capable of guiding themselves, and governing
those beneath them; and that thereby the
Order of the World might be maintained
without the Divine Interposition.—The Answer
to which is, that every Part of this Pretence
is groundless. It is demonstrable that the
very material World cannot be kept in Order
by second Causes, but continually stands
in Need of the Creator's Influence, as might
be shewn at large. And much less could
the Order and Harmony of the intellectual
World be maintained without the Divine
Administration. It is true, Men are
endued with Reason, and Angels with
more; but yet both Men and Angels being
endued also with Liberty, and imperfect,
might act against the Light of their
own Minds, and fall into Disorder; and
accordingly both have actually done so.
On

On which Account, were it not for God's SERM. Providence and Government, it is evident XVII. that the moral World, as well as the natural, would become a mere Chaos, and fall into inextricable Confusion. Is it not necessary for public Security, that evil Men and evil Angels be curbed and restrained? Is it not necessary that Innocence be protected, and Virtue encouraged? That Guilt be exposed and prosecuted, and Vice and Villainy checked and punished? And how should any thing of this kind be effectually done, if God did not sit at the Helm, direct all his Affairs, and dispose of all Events, according to the Rules of Righteousness and Truth.—But in order to discover the Weakness of this Plea, we need only take Notice how it would hold in any human Establishments. Is any thing to be done without Rulers and Governors? And supposing a Set of Laws, of the best Laws, already made; will they execute themselves? 'Tis very true that Men have Reason to direct them, and Laws of various Kinds; but 'tis likewise as true, that many Men have wild Humours, fierce Desires, and furious Passions, which frequently prompt them to act in Defiance both of Law and Reason.

SERM. On which Account, and for the Enforce-
XVII. ment and Support of both, an executive
Power is, and ever will be, absolutely necessary in all States and Communities. And must not this Observation hold much stronger in respect of the whole Creation? If the several Societies among Men require Rulers and Governors, and cannot subsist without them; what can we think of the Universe itself? Must not the Whole stand in greater Need of Government, than any Part? Most certain therefore it is, that the all-wise Creator would never produce such a great and glorious System, and then leave it in a State of Anarchy; this being utterly inconsistent with all the Rules of Wisdom that we are capable of discovering.

Nor is it less repugnant to his Righteousness and Goodness. As perfectly good, he must propose the Welfare of his Creatures; and in order thereto, he would not fail to direct and govern them. For as we have already seen, if he had left them to themselves, they could neither expect Happiness, Security, nor quiet.—Again, his Guidance and Government of the World clearly follows from the Rectitude of his Nature. It is impossible that he
should

should be ignorant of the Behaviour of his SERM.
Creatures. He must see at all times whe- XVII.
ther they do well or ill, whether they act 
virtuously or wickedly; and, as a righte-
ous Being, cannot fail to judge them ac-
cordingly. If God did not govern the
World, no sufficient Distinction could be
maintained between Virtue and Vice; nay,
in many Cases it would happen the latter
prospered more than the former. Vice
would often succeed and flourish, and
Virtue fall into extreme Distress. Now this,
I say, is what a righteous God cannot pos-
sibly suffer; not finally I mean. He may
suffer it for a Season, and in Fact we find
that he actually does so; insomuch that
his Government of the World has been
sometimes called in question on this very
Account. But certainly without just
Grounds. The irregular Distribution of
Good and Evil in this Life is indeed a
clear Proof of a Future State, wherein e-
very thing will be punctually adjusted and
set to rights; but it proves nothing at all
against the Doctrine we are considering.
As sure as God is righteous and holy, Vice
will suffer, and Virtue will prevail and
prosper in due time. But no Reason can
be shewn why the present Time must

SERM. needs be the proper Time: So far from it, XVII. that good Reasons may be given for the contrary. However, since it must be done sooner or later, either in this Life or the next; since it necessarily follows from the Perfections of the Divine Nature, that the righteous will be protected and encouraged, and the wicked punished; and since moreover this can only be done by the great Searcher of Hearts; the Consequence must be that the World is governed by him.

Should we go on to inquire how he governs it, and presume to search into the Methods and Measures of Divine Providence, we may easily bewilder ourselves in a Speculation vastly too high for us. We have all the Reason in the World to assure ourselves that God's Government is most perfect, in all Respects; but to account for the Direction and Disposal of particular Events, and to discover how far they come under, and coincide with general Laws, seem Undertakings far above our present Faculties.—We do not so much as know, with any Certainty, whether there be any just Ground for distinguishing, as we ordinarily do, between a general and a particular Providence. All particular Events, for aught we know, may be superin-

perintended and disposed by general Laws. SERM.
I might explain and confirm this Observa- XVII.
tion by various Instances and Suppositions; 
but I shall only mention at present that
which follows; a Supposition not only ve-
ry antient, but very natural, and therefore
more easy to be conceived, and more apt
to be entertained.—What I mean is, that
the Particularities of human Life may be
specially provided for by a Delegation of
Power and Authority to subordinate A-
gents; by whose invisible Intervention,
Events may be directed agreeably to the
Will and Wisdom of the Supreme Gover-
nor: And that perhaps in perfect Consist-
ence with the stated Laws of the natural
World. What Absurdity, what Impro-
priety, in supposing such a Provision as
this for the Tuition and Government of
Mankind? Can we think it any Deroga-
tion from the Honour and Majesty of the
Supreme Ruler, to invest certain Beings
of exalted Powers and Perfections with
the Administration of his Providential
Decrees; they presiding over the several
Parts of the Universe, while he himself,
who alone is capable of it, informs and
directs the Whole? This seems perfectly
conformable to that Subordination and

SERM. Scale of Beings, which prevail throughout
XVII. all Nature, as far as our Faculties are able
to search. Could we see further, we might
probably find every System, every habitable
Globe, under the Government of Vicege-
rents; and perhaps the various Districts
and Provinces of each divided amongst the
Host of Heaven, and respectively admini-
stered according to the Appointments of
unerring Wisdom. If this be agreeable
to Nature and Reason, as must, I think,
be allowed; I may safely add, that it is by
no Means disagreeable to Revelation: So
far from it, that we find in Scripture fre-
quent Intimations of this amazing Scheme
of Providence. I see not therefore why
it may not be supposed a general Law of
God's moral Government; and that such
a one, as no way interferes, but perfectly
consists with his Laws of Nature.—But
I return to what is more directly the Doc-
trine of my Text.

Thus then it appears from the plain
Principles of Reason that *the Lord is King*,
as we read in my Text: And the next
Thing to be considered is the Inference
which there follows, *the Earth may be glad
thereof*. And in Truth it is one of the
justest and most natural Inferences in the
World.

World. For what is there in all the SERM.
Compass of Nature, or even within the XVII.
Reach of human Imagination, that can
administer to the Minds of Men so much
true Comfort, Contentment, and Complacency, as this single Fact is capable of doing? The most desirable, and most joyful Truth, that can either be uttered, or conceived, is, that *the Lord is King*, and that *his Dominion endureth throughout all Ages.* If we have any Thought, any Reflection, must we not needs *be glad* to find ourselves in the Hands, and under the Protection of that Governor, whose great and constant Aim is the Safety and Felicity of all his Subjects? Who enjoins us no other Laws than those of Truth and Righteousness; which at the same Time are the Rule, the inviolable Rule of his own Actions. A Governor, who never wants Power to do whatever he pleases, and who never pleases to do any thing but what is just and fit. Who is gracious, merciful, and long-suffering; full of Gentleness, Goodness, and Loving-kindness; and whose *tender Mercies are over all his Works.* In short, a Governor, who is so far from dealing with his Creatures by any capricious Rules, or arbitrary Measures; that his
Will

SERM. Will is the very *Law of Kindness*: All his
XVII. Precepts are Favours and Blessings, and his
very Judgments Benefactions.

If we reflect on our Condition and Circumstances in this present World, we cannot but find Cause to rejoice on all Accounts, that we are under the Tuition and Administration of the Supreme Being. Considering our Wants and Infirmities, our Frailties and Follies, and how unable we are to help ourselves; our whole Life ought to be looked upon as a State of Minority: Even in our best and wisest Period, to lose the Guardianship of Heaven would be certain Ruin. This is our grand Support and Security; and comparatively speaking, the sole Foundation of our Hope and Trust. We are beset on all Sides, and threatened from all Quarters; are compassed about with a great Variety of Dangers and Distresses. Many Difficulties we meet with that we cannot conquer; many Obstacles that we cannot surmount. Numberless Evils hang over our Heads, ready to fall upon us, and crush us, every Instant. When Misfortunes are at a Distance, very often we cannot foresee them; and when we do foresee them, we often know not how to prevent them. And when they
arrive,

arrive, and are actually upon us, we frequently are at a Loss how to redress them, or where to find a Remedy.—We are liable to so many Disasters without, and so many Disorders within; are so much exposed to the Fury of the Elements, and the greater Fury of lawless and violent Men; find so many Snares and Temptations planted in our Way; have so many Hazards and Hardships to encounter; such a Number of Infirmities, Corruptions, and evil Habits to subdue in ourselves; and such Force, Fraud, and Falshood to withstand in others; that were we deprived of the Protection of Divine Providence, we should be left utterly desolate, and sink down into the Depths of Sin and Sorrow, and Misery, as naturally *as the Sparks fly upwards*.—But, on the other Hand, if we consider ourselves as the Objects of God's Care and Concern; that he is our Ruler, our Defender, our Guide; and *we his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture*; the Scene changes, our Condition brightens, and every thing appears with a new Face. If we take Care not to forfeit his Favours, nothing need to dismay us; for nothing can greatly hurt us. *Though we walked through the Valley of the Shadow of Death;*
though

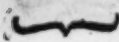
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XVII.

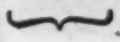
SERM. *though the Earth were removed, and the*
 XVII. *Mountains carried into the midst of the Sea;*

yet should we need to fear no Evil; for *God is our Refuge and Strength, a present Help, and a sure Support, in every Trouble.* Are we ignorant? God is Omniscient. Are we impotent? He is Almighty. Are we apt to err, and prone to Sin and Folly? He is unerring Wisdom, and spotless Perfection. If he be on our Side, what can be against us? If he protect us, who can touch us? Are we surrounded with Dangers and Calamities, Troubles and Trials; insomuch that our Case appears desperate? He can extricate us with the greatest Ease, and deliver us in a Moment. For all Nature is in his Hand, and the whole Creation at his Beck. — So far then we have just Cause to rejoice, and be glad, that *the Lord is King.*

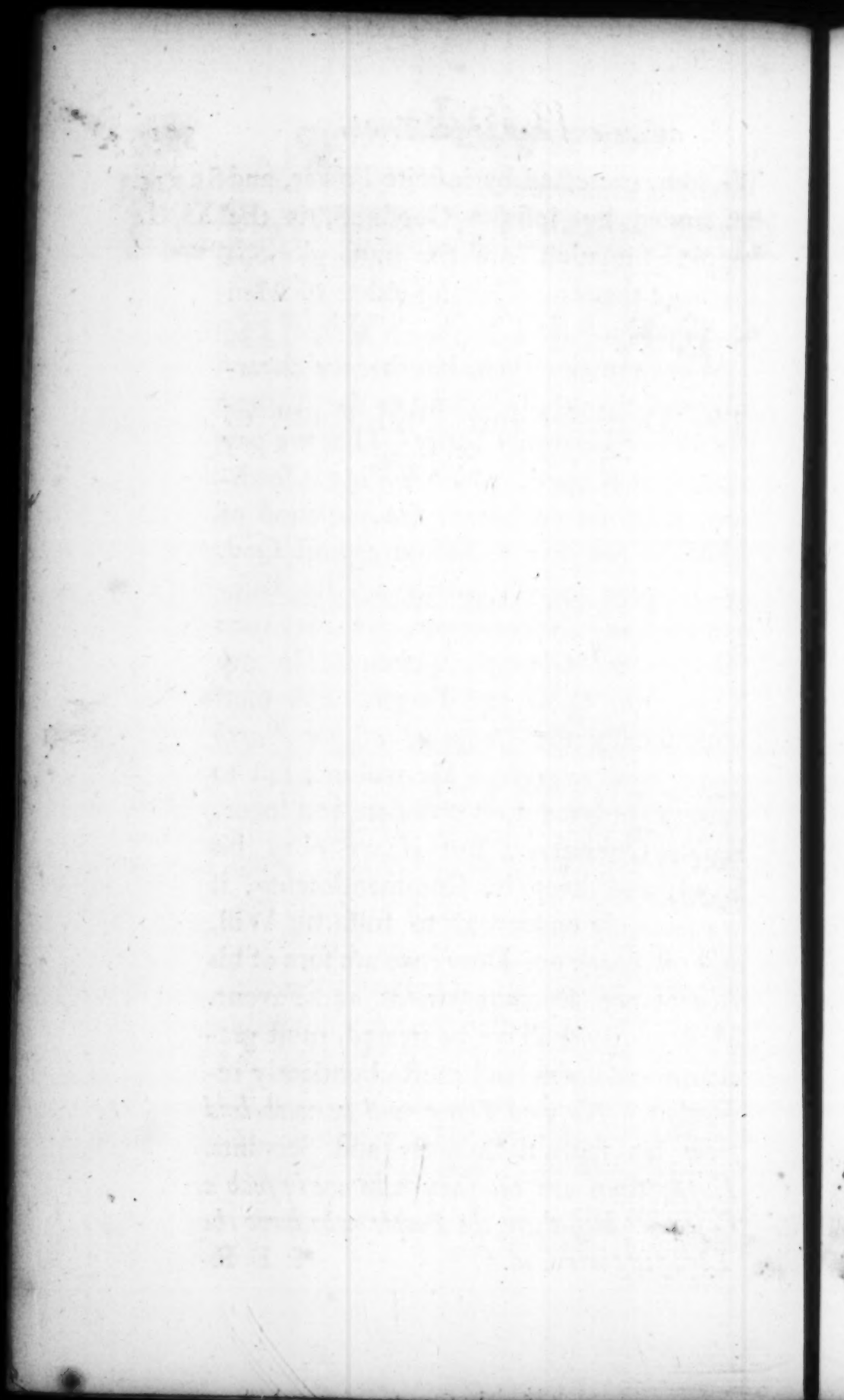
But further; as there are many and great Evils to be avoided, so there is a great Variety of Good to be sought after. Many Wants and Wishes we unavoidably have; many natural Desires that require to be gratified; many craving Appetites, and clamorous Affections, that will be provided for, or continually torment us. Though we may subsist, yet we cannot be said to prosper,

prosper, in a temporal Sense, without a SERM.
competent Share of the Comforts and Con- XVII.
veniencies of Life. And had we nothing 
to depend on but our own Endeavours;
how little should we be able to make of
them? We are apt to ascribe our Successes
to ourselves, and our own Conduct; but
doubtless in a great measure, very unjustly.
They are chiefly owing to divine Provi-
dence, and the Succours of Heaven;
which conduct us, though unseen, and
carry us on to prosperous Events. With-
out these invifible Aids, we should fail, and
fall short, in almost every Undertaking.
No Art, no Skill, no Diligence would avail
us, if Providence forlook us. It would
only be *lost Labour, that we hasted to rise
early, and eat the Bread of Carefulness*, if
we had nothing to trust to but our own
Endeavours. Nor could any of our Fel-
low-Creatures insure our Success. For,
comparatively speaking, *vain is the Help of
Man*, and precarious are all his Purposes.
—But though human Means be insufficient
for the accomplishing of our Ends, and the
satisfying of our Desires: Yet what may
we not expect from the Interposition of
Heaven, and the Wisdom and Bounty of
God's Providence? What Good may we
not

SERM. not hope for, if we be not wanting to ourselves? Whatever Objects we set our Hearts
XVII.  upon; whatever Blessings we have in View; if they be fit for us, and we for them, we shall, in due time, assuredly obtain them. And is not this Consideration abundantly sufficient to satisfy any reasonable Mind? If any Enjoyment be, in its Consequences, mischievous to ourselves, we are false to our own Interest if we desire it: And if it be detrimental to the Publick, we cannot innocently pretend to it. But under these Limitations, our Pursuits will not fail to be crowned with Success.—And what a Happiness, what an Honour is it to the Children of Men, to have, I will not say such a Governor, but such a Patron, such a Benefactor, such a Friend? A Friend whose Power is commensurate to his Wisdom, and his Goodness to both. A Friend, so kind and constant, as never to desert those who do not desert him. Whose Favours are inestimable, and his Bounty inexhaustible. In a Word, on whom we entirely depend for all the Blessings of this Life, and all our Hopes in the next.—Upon the whole, to be under the Divine Rule and Government is the most desirable Circumstance in the World. To be directed by infinite
Wisdom,

Wisdom, protected by infinite Power, and SERM.
befriended by infinite Goodness, is the XVII.
happiest Situation, and the most glorious 
Privilege that could belong either to Men
or Angels.

What remains then, but that we cheer-
fully and thankfully submit to the Autho-
rity of our Heavenly Ruler? That we pay
a constant Regard, and a willing Obedi-
ence to his sacred Laws; the Violation of
which is not only Rebellion against God,
but Enmity against ourselves. By Diso-
bedience and Impenitence, we may turn
the *Joy and Gladness*, spoken of in my
Text, into Grief and Terror. For most
undoubtedly the *Judge of all the Earth*
will do what is right. He will not fail to
execute Judgment on obstinate and incor-
rigible Offenders. But if we obey his
Laws, and keep his Commandments; if
we sincerely endeavour to fulfil his Will,
and discharge our Duty; we are sure of his
Acceptance, Encouragement, and Favour.
Most gently shall we be treated, most gra-
ciously indulged, and most abundantly re-
warded. *No good Thing will be withhold*
from his faithful Subjects and Servants.
Happy then are all they who are in such a
Case; yea blessed are the People who have the
Lord for their God.





S E R M O N XVIII.

The Dignities and Distinctions of
Human Nature.

P S A L M VIII. Verse 5.

*For thou hast made him a little lower than
the Angels, and hast crowned him with
Glory and Honour.*



H A T E V E R was the imme-^{SERM.}
diate Occasion of this Psalm, XVIII.
and whatever remote Views
may be ascribed to it of a Pro-
phetick Nature; yet, in its direct and
primary Construction, it evidently contains
a pious Contemplation and Acknowledg-
ment of God's unspeakable Wisdom and
Goodness, manifested in the Works of the
Creation, and more particularly in the
Formation of Man; whom he elsewhere
represents as *wonderfully made*, and here

SERM. sets forth as peculiarly favoured and eminently distinguished; vested with such Powers and Privileges, and possessed of such Honour and Dignities, as constitute him little inferior to the very Angels themselves.

The Dignity of Human Nature may be considered either comparatively, that is, in relation to the various Tribes of Creatures between us, or absolutely and in itself. For wherever there is found the Image of the great Creator, there, we may affirm is real and absolute Dignity; which therefore may justly be ascribed to Man, on account of his being expressly allowed in Scripture to be formed after God's Image, and of those high Powers and Faculties wherein that Image is supposed to consist. The Honour indeed which is done him in Scripture by the Attribution of his Maker's Likeness, has been by some differently explained, and understood; as if it consisted not in personal Powers, but in that Authority and Dominion given him over all other living Creatures on the Face of the Earth. Whatever Resemblance may arise from this Dominion, it cannot, I think, be allowed that this is the principal Ground of the Honour we are speaking

ing of; forasmuch as it seems only a natural Consequence of those intellectual and moral Powers with which God has blessed the Children of Men. Here therefore, in all Probability, we must trace the Divine Image, as well as search for that Pre-eminence and Distinction wherein the Psalmist triumphs in my Text. By these chiefly is our Nature ennobled, and even our inferior Faculties raised, refined, and rendered more valuable.

The Perceptions of *Sense* belong, more or less, to all Animals; many of which are possessed equally by Men and Brutes. Nay, in some Instances, their Senses are stronger and quicker than ours; and perhaps their Instincts more numerous and extensive; which, all Things considered, may be looked upon as necessary for the Preservation of their Beings, and the Continuance of their Species. Nevertheless how wide, how remarkable a Difference is there between their Perceptions and ours? Those very Creatures which have the sharpest and most piercing Sight, how poorly, how imperfectly do they perceive external Objects in comparison of Man? In him the external Power is accompanied with an internal one; which enables

SERM. him to discover that Order, that Proportion,
XVIII. on, that Beauty, of which no inferior

~ Creature appears to have the least Idea. Hence he becomes a fit Spectator of God's Works, and is so far capable of beholding and admiring the Wonders of the Creation: Hence he enjoys the Pleasures of extended Views, and spacious Prospects; and can entertain himself with all the Varieties of Art and Nature. He can lift up his Eyes to the Heavens, and survey the Glories of the Firmament; discovering there, and indeed every where, abundant Matter for the Exercise and Employment even of his highest Faculties. And this Superiority of human Sense is not peculiar to that of Sight. While other Creatures only hear Sounds in such a manner as conduces to the Purposes of Animal Life, Man is capable of discovering their Proportions, and thereby qualified for the Perception and Pleasure of Harmony; which, properly speaking, cannot be ascribed to any Ear but his own. And in him this Sense is, in a wonderful manner, subservient to the Use and Operation of his noblest Powers, as will be further observed and considered afterwards.

If

If from the Powers and Perceptions of SERM.
Sense we go on to those of *Imagination* and XVIII.
Memory, the Mind of Man appears to still
greater Advantage, and the Difference
between him and other Animals much
wider. Tho' the Images which Brutes de-
rive from Sense, may really make Impres-
sion, and abide with them, so far I mean,
as to recur, and present themselves to
their Imaginations as often, and in such a
manner, as their Occasions require, yet
how inconsiderable is this in comparison
of the same Faculty in Man? For as those
Images are but few, and of the lowest
Kind, so the Minds of those Creatures
may be looked upon as entirely passive in
the Perception of them. Such Images in
them seem nothing more than so many
Calls of Nature, which they observe and
follow, not by Choice, but Necessity.
Whereas Man has an active as well as a
passive Memory: He can for the most
Part recollect, at pleasure, whatever he
has seen; and review any of those Objects
that have entered in at his Senses; and not
only so, but he can alter and diversify
them as he pleases. He can enlarge or
diminish, divide or compound them with-
out Measure, and without End. He can

SERM. frame innumerable Images that he never
XVIII. saw, and as it were create to himself an
Infinity of Conceptions that exist no where
but in his own Mind. And how capacious and comprehensive is human Imagination? And what an endless Variety of Objects is treasured up in it? How rich in those natural Ideas, with which it is daily replenished; and how full and fruitful of its own Inventions!—And as we justly admire this Faculty for the Extent and Compass of it, and the Variety of its Furniture; so we cannot well avoid taking Notice how amazingly quick it is in its Perceptions and Operations! How soon and how easily does the Mind bring together the remotest Objects, and connect the most distant Events! How swiftly does it run thro' the several Ages and Periods of the World, and carry on its Views from the Creation to the Consummation!—The Imagination is not to be bounded or retarded by any Limits of Time, or Lengths of Space: On the Wings of this Faculty we can fly in an Instant to the uttermost Parts of the Earth; we can ascend on high, climb the Heavens, and soar among the Stars. We can travel on, in Idea, from World to World, from System to System,

till our Thoughts be quite lost and swallowed up in the Immensity of God's Works. In short, our Conceptions are not limited or circumscribed within the Bounds of the universal Creation ; but can pass the utmost Confines of Matter, and wander on, without End, in the unmeasurable Regions of empty Space.—However prone Men are to abuse this Faculty, and prostitute it to the Purposes of Sin and Folly ; to debase it with mean Images, or pollute it with vicious ones ; whoever seriously considers the wonderful Nature of it, will soon be convinced of its Value and Dignity. Every thoughtful Man must be astonished, when he reflects on that Multiplicity of Objects, which are hoarded in his Mind, and impressed on his Imagination : To find in himself a Power of calling before him distinct Representations of whatever his Eyes have beheld, and of framing infinite Forms and Species that he never saw, and never heard of ! Innumerable Scenes, both natural and artificial, rising in Succession, and continually entertaining the Mind thro' every Stage and Period of Life. This is so familiar to us, that we are apt to take little Notice of it ; and therefore seldom know how to estimate

SERM. mate such a Privilege: But, however we XVIII. may neglect or overlook it, it is in itself
 { most wonderful, and clearly discovers to all that will attend, the unspeakable Power and Wisdom of our great Creator.

And yet this Faculty, surprizing as it is, is but inferior and subordinate in the Mind of Man; which possesses still higher, more valuable, and more excellent Powers. Proceed we then to consider the noblest and most divine Gift of *Reason*, or *Intelligence*; which exalts us into our Maker's Likeness, and enables us, in some measure, to imitate a Being of infinite Perfection. This then we are to look upon as the chief Distinction, the glorious Prerogative of a human Soul. To this supreme Faculty our Senses and our Imaginations are alike subservient; as being directed by it, and deriving from it their principal Value. Without a Power of reflecting and reasoning, no Perceptions either of Sense or Imagination, could avail us much, or procure us any considerable Satisfaction. We might take in a great Variety of Objects; but, like Brutes, should really *understand* nothing of them.—'Tis by this Faculty that we discover Causes and Effects, find out the Ends and Uses of Things, and apprehend

hend their Properties, Relations, Consequences; comparing Objects together, XVIII. and discerning where they agree, and where they differ; observing their various Connexions and Dependencies, and perceiving how one Thing infers and follows from another. It is this Faculty which enables us to abstract our Thoughts, and turn particular Ideas into universal ones; to cultivate Arts and Sciences, invent Languages, and maintain Correspondence over the Face of the whole Earth; to form Societies, enact Laws, and establish Government. By this Faculty we launch out into the boundless Ocean of Truth, and return laden with Treasures of Knowledge: by this we commit our Thoughts to Writing, communicate them at a Distance, and transmit them to Posterity. By this Faculty we apprehend moral Relations, discern Right and Wrong, Good and Evil; are capable of regulating our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, and of ennobling our Mind by the Acquisition of Wisdom and Virtue.—Again, hence it is, that we can turn our Thoughts back upon themselves, and clearly perceive the Powers and Operations of our own Minds; that we distinguish between Matter and Spirit,
between

SERM. between our Souls and our Bodies, and XVIII. find the one destined to Dust, the other to Immortality. Hence it is that we conclude the Existence of innumerable Orders and Degrees of superior Spirits, exalted far above us in Power and Capacity, and approaching in Resemblance nearer and nearer to the great Original. Lastly, hence it is, that we are capable of discovering and demonstrating the Existence of the Deity; of learning his Will, and looking into his adorable Attributes and spotless Perfections: That we become acquainted with the *Majesty of his Kingdom*, and the *Greatness of his Excellence*; before whom all the Inhabitants of the Earth, all Powers and Principalities, are reputed as nothing: That we find abundant Cause to admire him in all his Works, and all his Ways, and every where behold the Marks and Footsteps of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness.

Having thus considered those Faculties of the Soul which may be called its Perceptive Powers, we are next to take notice of its *Liberty*, or Freedom of Will. And this may be looked upon as an Image of the Creator's Power, as our Reason is of his Intelligence. By this Faculty we
move

move our Bodies, and exert the Opera-SERM.
tions of our Minds; and find in a great XVIII.
Measure, our Thoughts, Words, and
Actions at our own Disposal. As we
readily move our Limbs, though we can-
not comprehend muscular Motion; so
we freely command our Ideas, though we
are not able to understand how it is that
such a Power is exerted. Every Mo-
ment's Experience assures us that we
have it; though we can give very little
Account of the Nature of it, or the
Manner of its Operation. We say to one
Thought, *go, and it goeth; and to ano-*
ther, come and it cometh. And though
some intrude themselves, and others, by
deep Impression, or long Custom, take
fast hold of the Mind, and are hard to be
driven away; yet none can stay against
our Wills: If we be resolute and stedfast,
we can dismiss those Thoughts, and ba-
nish those Ideas, which are most fami-
liar or importunate, and introduce what
we please in the room of them. And the
same Freedom we have in respect of our
Words and Actions, which equally de-
pend on the uncontrollable Determina-
tions of our Minds and Wills. In short,
we are entrusted with the Guidance and
Govern-

SERM. Government of ourselves, and the Reins XVIII. are put into our own Hands. And being

thus constituted Masters of ourselves, and our own Conduct, and endued with suitable Talents and Powers, we are justly answerable for the Discharge of this important Trust. Whoever does amiss, the Fault is his own, and *Sin lieth at his Door*. A Man may indeed, in some Sense, lose this his Liberty: He may so far lose it as to become *the Servant of Sin*, and a Slave to his Lusts and Passions; but then this Bondage is, and must be, his Choice, and he is a Slave of his own making. Doubtless Men may abuse or impair any of their Faculties: They may, by Mismanagement, dull their Senses, defile their Imaginations, corrupt their Understandings, or shackle their Wills; but this is so far from being an Argument against the Power I am speaking of, that it amounts to plain Proofs and direct Instances of it.

I might now proceed to take notice of various Affections and Propensities, planted in the Soul, and balanced against each other in a wonderful manner; a Display of which would open a new Scene, and yield further Proofs of the Point before us: But this being too copious and complicated

cated a Subject for our present Enquiry, I SERM.
shall not now insist on it. The foregoing XVIII.
Account, though but a short and imperfect Sketch of the Powers of Human Nature, may suffice to convince us of the peculiar Excellence and Dignity thereof; even without the Support and Confirmation of other Arguments, which I purposely forbear, as not directly included in the Words of my Text. At present, I only consider Man in that Light wherein the Psalmist has there placed him, as naturally endued with high Gifts, and honourable Distinctions, and fixed in a Situation little lower than the very Angels. — We know not indeed, and should not therefore presume to define, what particular Powers belong to superior Spirits. We can neither determine to what Heights and Dignities they are exalted, nor into what Classes and Gradations they are distributed by the great Creator. But, in general, we may securely say, that they neither have, nor can have, any higher Dignity, or nobler Distinction, than to be formed, after God's own Image; and this very Honour, though in a lower Degree, the Children of Men are blessed with. That Divine Likeness which consists

SERM. sits in intellectual and moral Powers, is
XVIII. common to Men and Angels; though
~~~~~ doubtless in very different Measures and  
Proportions: Such a Difference prevailing,  
without Question, in various Ranks and  
Subordinations, among the Angels them-  
selves.—May it not then be allowable to  
magnify human Nature, and extol it,  
as it were, *in the Confidence of boasting?*  
Such a Resemblance, such an Alliance  
as my Text speaks of, demands our pe-  
culiar Attention; our highest Regards, and  
most joyful Acknowledgments. Though  
one Part of us be only Dust and Ashes. the  
other Part partakes of a Heavenly Original,  
and claims Kindred with the Angels. Have  
they immaterial and incorruptible Substan-  
ces? so have we. Have they Reason, Intel-  
ligence, Liberty? so have we. Are they qua-  
lified to worship the Creator, to admire him  
in his Works, and enjoy him for ever? so  
are we. Doubtless then the foregoing Doc-  
trine is well grounded and firmly sup-  
ported; and our only remaining Concern  
is to make a proper Use of it.—In order  
thereto, I shall briefly point out such In-  
ferences and Conclusions, as naturally  
flow from it; and, if we be not want-  
ing to ourselves, will make us improve  
it

it to our unspeakable Comfort and Advan- SERM.  
tage. And in the XVIII.

*First* Place, from the Dignity of human Nature, and those distinguishing Powers which are granted us, we may justly presume setting aside all other Proofs, that this present Life is not the whole of our Existence; but that we are designed to live again, and destined for another State. A Being so curiously framed, so richly adorned, so nobly endowed, so *fearfully and wonderfully made*, as the Soul of Man appears to be, cannot surely be confined by the Maker of it to that short Span which is here allotted us. Such a Being can never be intended to pass away like a Shadow; and after the Term of a few Years, expire and perish for ever. If this were our Case, why such a Waste of Workmanship? Why such a Profusion of Art and Skill? Whence is it that our Talents and Endowments are thus disproportioned to our Conditions? To what End was the Divine Image planted in us? Can such excellent Powers, and sublime Faculties, be given us merely for the Purposes of this vain and transitory State? Can it be supposed that Man, after he has been tossed a little while on the Billows

SERM. lows of a tempestuous World, should immediately sink into utter Oblivion? Is it

to be imagined that a Race of Creatures thus furnished, and fitted out, should only rise and vanish like Bubbles in a Storm? If Death make an utter End of us; if our Souls are to *fade as Leaves*, and be cut down as *Flowers of the Field*; why were we made *little lower than the Angels*, and crowned with *Glory and Honour*?—Had Mankind nothing to expect beyond the Grave, their best Faculties would be a Torment to them; and the more considerate and virtuous they were, the greater Concern and Grief they would feel from the shortness of their Prospect. When a Man had greatly improved his Mind by a pious Contemplation of his Maker, and a diligent Study of his Nature and his Works; how deeply would it afflict him, to consider, that in a very short time he might be stripped of those glorious Ideas, and lose both them and himself for ever! But every wise and good Man may have the Satisfaction of assuring himself that this will not be his Fate: For *surely there is a Reward, and his Expectation shall not be cut off.* But

Secondly, Endued with such Powers, and blessed with such Prospects, we ought ever  
to

to maintain a deep Sense of our Maker's SERM.  
 Bounty and Goodness, and to be continu- XVIII.  
 ally acknowledging our Obligations with  
 the utmost Gratitude, Sincerity, and Ve-  
 neration. Nothing is more manifest, than  
 that we are bound to be thankful in Pro-  
 portion to the Gifts that we have received.  
 And since the Value of these is the Rule  
 and Measure of our Obligations, it plainly  
 appears from the foregoing Account how  
 immensely we are indebted? To be con-  
 stituted moral Agents, and crowned with  
 Liberty and Understanding; to bear the  
 Signature of God's Image, and be quali-  
 fied for the Joys and Glories of a blessed  
 Immortality, are Goods really inestima-  
 ble, and Privileges above all Price. As  
 such, they deserve and demand suitable  
 Sentiments, and the most solemn Thankf-  
 giving. We ought to be continually ex-  
 tolling our supreme Benefactor, and *abun-*  
*dantly uttering the Memory of his great*  
*Goodness: To give him Thanks for his un-*  
*speaking Gifts; to praise him for his mar-*  
*vellous Works; who hath crowned us with*  
*Mercy and Loving-kindness, and made us*  
*meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of*  
*the Saints.*



SERM. *Thirdly*, Not only in our Thoughts,

XVIII. not only with our Lips, but in our Lives

and Actions, and through the whole Course of our Conduct, is our Gratitude to appear. Since God has made us intelligent and free; capable of knowing and serving our Creator; we are bound, in all respects, to behave accordingly. More particularly it is incumbent on us to take special Heed that we abuse not God's Gifts; that we do not pervert the noble Faculties which he has given us, nor prostitute them to the Purposes of Sin and Folly. When God has fixed us in so high and happy a Situation, and fitted us for a State yet higher and happier, as well as more durable; when he has placed us near to the Angels, and prepared for us, in common with them, a glorious Immortality; what can be more ungrateful, what more unworthy, what more stupid, than wilfully to debase ourselves, and sink down to a Level with the Beasts that perish? What greater Indignity can we offer to the Author of our Beings, than to be thus regardless of the Honour he has done us, and the Happiness he has offered us? To riot in his Blessings, and rebel against his Goodness? To deface, as far as in us lies,

lies, his sacred Image, and drown our rational Powers in Intemperance and Sensuality? We cannot be ignorant that they were given us, not to administer to our Lusts and Appetites, but to direct and govern them: And if we suffer these to break loose, and give Law to our Reason; we are so far from maintaining the Dignity of our Nature, that we fall into a State lower and more abject than Brutality itself. Those Creatures which have not Understanding, must unavoidably be acted by inferior Principles: But for moral Agents to forsake the Light of Reason, and follow the Impulse of blind Passions, is the highest Affront to their Maker, and the greatest Injury that can be done to themselves. Such a Proceeding as this quite confounds the Order of Nature, and turns the human Frame upside down; transforms a Man into a Monster, and buries all his Honours in the Dust.

*Fourthly*, and lastly, It is not sufficient that we guard against the Abuse of our natural Powers; we are obliged, both in point of Duty and Interest, to cultivate and improve them. Whatever Talents God commits to our Trust, whether internal or external, he expects and de-

SERM. mandates an Account. The higher human  
XVIII. Nature is exalted, and the nearer it ap-  
proaches to that of Angels, the greater  
Obligations Men lie under to exert ac-  
cordingly. For it is the Rule both of  
Reason and Revelation, that *to whomsoever  
much is given, of them shall be much required.*  
Since God has favoured us with such va-  
luable Powers, and precious Capacities;  
improveable in themselves, and designed  
for Improvement; they cannot be neg-  
lected by us without great Dishonour to  
the Donor, as well as great Detriment to  
ourselves. And indeed our Welfare, both  
here and hereafter, very much depends on  
the Care we take, and the Endeavour we  
use in this important Affair: And that from  
the Nature of Things, as well as by Di-  
vine Appointment. For Happiness is the  
natural Result of a due Use and Exercise  
of our Faculties. Hence flow the inesti-  
mable Advantages of Wisdom and Virtue;  
which outweigh, infinitely outweigh, all  
outward Goods, however various, and a-  
bundant. Even this *Life consisteth not in  
such Possessions*, nor in the *Abundance* there-  
of; the principal Comforts and Enjoy-  
ments of which are of quite another Na-  
ture. And as to Futurity, no other Pre-  
paration,

paration, no other Provision, can avail any thing, or turn to any Account. The Joys of Heaven, whatever they may be, can rest on no other Foundation; forasmuch as without Virtue no Man can possibly be qualified for them. The Improvement of our Talents is therefore, we see, a Matter of great and eternal Consequence. Our well-being for ever depends thereupon; and every Degree of Bliss is commensurate to that of our Improvement. — What remains then, but that we imprint these Truths in our Minds, and be influenced by them? That, entertaining a just Sense of our Privileges, we strive to convert them to our own true Good, and our Maker's Glory. In vain shall we boast of the Dignity of our Nature, if there be none in our Conduct. Without a suitable Behaviour, the Height of our Pretensions will only aggravate our Guilt, and increase our Condemnation. By debasing ourselves here, we shall forfeit every thing hereafter, and degrade ourselves for ever. On the other hand, if in this Life we be mindful of the Dignity of our Nature, and act agreeably thereto; if prompted by a laudable Ambition, we labour to improve



SERM. it, and press on towards Perfection ; we  
XVIII. shall be exalted, in the next, above all  
our Hopes and Conceptions : Bliss, Glory,  
and Honour, shall be our Reward and  
our Portion ; and, in the Language of  
the Prophet, we shall *shine like Stars for  
ever and ever.*



## S E R M O N XIX.

Natural and Moral Proofs of a  
Future State.

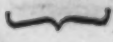
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ECCLES. XII. Part of the viirh Verse.

*And the Spirit shall return unto God who  
gave it.*

**T**HIS Chapter begins with an SERM.  
Exhortation to Youth, to sea- XIX.  
son their Minds with an early  
Sense of God and their Duty;  
that it may direct them in all their Ways,  
and be a Support and Comfort to them  
in the Declension of Life. The wise  
Preacher shews the Folly of deferring  
the Thoughts of Religion, and the Im-  
provement of Men's Minds to their lat-  
ter Days. He is so far from looking  
upon old Age as a proper Season for the  
Accomplishment of this great Work, that

SERM. he represents it as scarce able to bear its  
XIX. own Weight: And then describes, in a  
noble Allegory, its various Infirmities and  
gradual Decays, till it terminate in Death  
and Dissolution. Next he pursues the  
Soul and Body after their Separation, points  
out the Fate and Lot of both, and traces  
them to their respective Originals. *The  
Dust*, says he, *shall return to the Earth  
as it was, and the Spirit shall return unto  
God who gave it.* That is, the Body shall  
dissolve into that Earth of which it was  
first composed, and be incorporated with  
it; but the Soul being of a higher and  
nobler Nature, will survive the Separation,  
and return into the Hands of its Creator;  
to give an Account of itself, and be by  
him treated and dealt with according to  
the Condition and Circumstances in which  
he shall find it.—My Text is therefore  
a plain and positive Declaration of a Fu-  
ture State; and, by probable Consequence  
of the Perpetuity of that State; which are  
therefore to be the Subjects of the follow-  
ing Discourse.—And what can be more  
worthy of our Inquiry and Concern? Of  
all Questions that can possibly come under  
our Consideration, the most important is,  
Whether there be not another Life after  
this:

this: Whether we are to die like brute SERM.  
 Beasts that have no Understanding, or to XIX.  
 live again in a Future State, and exist   
 for ever. These are Points of such vast  
 Moment, such infinite Consequence, that  
 they necessarily demand every Man's most  
 serious Attention. In other Pursuits we  
 may be engaged by a Principle of Curiosity,  
 or the Love of Truth; or perhaps some  
 particular Interest: But on the Resolution  
 of these Points depends our All; for so  
 indeed it is upon the Comparison. If  
 Death make an utter End of us, and we  
 have no Prospect beyond it, this Life may  
 be looked upon as a mere Shadow, or a  
 Dream not worth regarding.— But perhaps  
 it will be asked, what Occasion there is  
 to examine a Question that we find  
 already determined to our Hands. For  
 does not Revelation assure us of a Future  
 State? And are not *Life and Immortality*  
*fully brought to Light in the Gospel?*  
 This is very true; but still the Proofs  
 and Evidences of natural Reason deserve  
 to be considered; partly to arm our  
 Minds against the Objections of Unbelievers,  
 and enable us to promote their Conviction;  
 and partly for the Support and Confirmation  
 of our own Faith. And indeed



SERM. deed it cannot but give Satisfaction to every  
 XIX. rational Christian, to find that the Doctrines of that Revelation which he has embraced, are perfectly agreeable to the Nature of Things, and Reason of his his own Mind.—Let us then briefly consider the great Doctrine of a Future State in this Light, and see what Indications, what Evidence, we can discover by it. In order thereto it will be requisite to consider.—The Nature of a human Soul.—The present Condition and Circumstances of Mankind.—And the moral Perfections of our Maker.—I begin with inquiring into the Nature and Frame of a human Soul; concerning which let it be observed in the

*First* place, That it plainly appears to be a simple, uncompounded, indivisible Substance. All Matter is evidently Composition; every Part or Parcel of it being an endless Combination or Heap of Substances; and, by Consequence, necessarily liable to Dissolution and Corruption. For the Particles whereof it consists, are always unavoidably subject to Disunion and Separation; and accordingly hence it comes to pass, that every System of Matter is broken up in Time, and sooner or later moulders

moulders away. But that the Soul is SERM. not thus compounded, is manifest from XIX. all its Perceptions, and all its Operations; as might be shewn at large, were not such Arguments too abstracted for the present Occasion. The Soul then being an uncompounded, single Substance, can admit of no Division or Dissolution; and from hence it clearly follows, that it is and must be incorruptible. But how incorruptible? May not God annihilate it whenever he pleases? Doubtless he may; and the same may be said of the whole Creation. Whether it be probable that he will do so, is to be inquired and considered afterwards. In the mean time, we may safely conclude from the foregoing Consideration, that the Soul is not capable of being destroyed by second Causes; which is all that the present Argument pretends to prove. But

*Secondly,* Another Argument drawn from the Nature of the Soul is the Excellence of those Powers and Faculties which God has given it. But having particularly considered this Point in the foregoing Discourse, it will be needless to resume it here, nor shall I repeat it. It may be sufficient to point out in a few Words

SERM. Words where the Force of the Argument

XIX. lies. Since God has endued us with in-

tellectual and moral Capacities ; those great and sublime Powers, which dignify our Nature, and render us Partakers of the Divine Image ; it can never be supposed, with the least Colour of Probability, that he should confine us to the short Span of this present Life ; and intend us in a few Years, to perish for ever. Since the Soul of Man is so highly exalted, and so nobly framed and furnished, it must, in all Likelihood, be designed for a very different Duration, as well as a more perfect State.— Especially if we consider

*Thirdly*, That we neither do nor can arrive in this Life at that Perfection and Maturity, of which our Natures are manifestly capable. All the Creatures beneath us seem to attain their full Perfection in their present State ; I mean, to rise to the Height of their respective Capacities. But this appears far from being the Case of human Souls. Even those Men that have the largest Abilities, and fairest Opportunities, and make the best Use of them, neither do nor can accomplish their Minds to the Extent of their Faculties. They can neither obtain that Measure of Knowledge,  
nor

nor those Degrees of Virtue, nor that Portion of Happiness whereof they are capable.—Part of human Life is spent before the first Dawnings of Reason; and a great Part of it passed before we reach any Ripeness of Understanding. To which may be added the Disadvantages and Decays that commonly attend Men in the last Stage of Life. And how short, how scanty is the intermediate Term for the Culture of our Minds, and the Improvement of our Faculties? Yet short as it is, a great Part of it is unavoidably taken up in providing for the Occasions of our Bodies, and answering the Demands of Sense. Are we then so framed, as barely to be allowed just to taste the Sweets of Knowledge, and the Satisfaction of Truth? Are these desirable Objects set before our Eyes to engage our Affections, and excite our Longings; and as soon almost as we understand the Worth of them, to be snatched away from us for ever? Was the Soul formed with such large Capacities, for such small Improvements, and so inconsiderable a Duration? Was it fitted for a perpetual Progress, and an endless Growth; and yet designed to be cut off, as it were, in its Infancy, and  
perish

SERM.  
XIX.



SERM. perish almost at its first setting out? For;  
XIX. in Truth, the Understandings of Men in  
this Life, appear only to be in their infant State; as being doubtless capable of exceeding their present Attainments, as much as the Knowledge of grown Men exceeds that of Children. — Again, the Measure of Man's Virtues and moral Graces is no less imperfect and defective: Supposing him as careful and diligent about them as he ought to be; yet even on this Supposition he could be no very great Proficient. Considering the Patterns that Men have to copy after, and the Perfections they have to imitate, a whole Eternity may seem requisite for accomplishing their Minds, and completing their Improvements: Or, to speak more properly, they can never be completed; because they will ever be capable of further Degrees, and higher Advancement. Besides, we contract in our first Years such an Attachment to our Senses and Appetites, and such a Fondness for their respective Objects, that the Remainder of our Lives is seldom sufficient to disengage ourselves, and recover a right Bias; much less for arriving at a State of Perfection. In short, we have so many Indispositions  
to

*of a Future State.*

to remove, so many Disorders to rectify, SERM.  
so many evil Habits to shake off, and so XIX.  
many good ones to introduce and estab-  
lish; that the best Men can only be con-  
sidered as Beginners and Probationers in  
Virtue: So far are they from being able  
to perfect their Natures. Can it then be  
supposed that God should have ordained  
us only to make an Entrance into the  
Paths of Wisdom and Virtue; or, at the  
utmost, a very short and precarious Pro-  
gress; and then totally disappear, and drop  
into Oblivion! When we have just found  
our Feet, and learned to guide our Steps;  
must we then be struck down, to rise no  
more! Can these be the Fruits of our  
moral Endeavours, and religious Improve-  
ments? No Man can possibly believe it,  
till he have quite forgotten who it is that  
governs the World; as will further ap-  
pear afterwards.—And since Man's Vir-  
tue is thus imperfect in this Life, his  
Happiness must needs be so too. For  
as to outward Goods, they are little more  
than Shadows of true Bliss. The En-  
joyments of this World are empty, and  
unsatisfactory, as well as uncertain; and  
the whole Train of our Pursuits is, in  
reality, a Succession of Disappointments.  
Such

SERM. Such Objects are not big enough to an-

XIX. swer our Faculties. *The Eye is not satis-*

*fied with seeing, nor the Ear filled with bearing; and much less is the Mind in Possession of its Wishes. Since then we cannot find true and solid Satisfaction in this State; since we walk in a vain Shew, and disquiet ourselves in vain; we may hence derive just Hopes of better Success in another. If God created us in order to partake of the Overflowings of his Felicity; that End neither is, nor ever can be effectually answered here; where little more is allowed us than a bare Glimpse of Happiness, and that at a Distance. And who can imagine, after we have acted, or endeavoured to act, a short Part in the Theatre of the World; that the great Business of Life should then be finished, and the Scene shuts up for ever!*

*Fourthly,* Another Indication appearing in the Nature and Frame of our Minds, is that earnest Desire of Immortality, which so uniformly and universally prevails. A Future State, and that a perpetual one, is the Object of every Man's Wish, *his* only excepted, who is so obstinately and desperately guilty, as to dread the Vengeance of Heaven; and upon that Account, and that

that only, wishes himself out of Being. SERM.  
And even in this Case, the Desire of Ex- XIX.  
istence is far from being extinguished. It  
still operates, however over-ruled by the  
Terrors of his Prospect.—But to pro-  
ceed, I am not supposing that the Desire  
here spoken of was, like many others,  
actually planted in our Minds by the Au-  
thor of Nature: A Supposition as need-  
less, as it seems to be groundless. For  
the Love of natural Good being necessary  
and unavoidable; in order to obtain that  
Good, the Desire of Existence must con-  
sequently be so too. I mean, that it  
must take place, whenever there is Hap-  
piness in Expectation. For in this Case  
the Desire of Existence necessarily results  
from the Frame and Constitution of Nature.  
How then, or which way does it amount  
to an Argument of a Future State? Had  
the Creator implanted this Desire in our  
Minds, it might readily have been con-  
cluded that he would not fail to gratify  
it: But how can such a Consequence be  
drawn from a Desire confessedly necessary?  
I answer, that it is as full and forcible a  
Proof in this Case, as in the other. For  
to frame our Minds, and fix the Nature  
and Constitution of Things, in such a



SERM. ner, as must necessarily produce this De-  
XIX. fire; is, in Effect, the same thing, as if  
 he had actually and directly formed the  
Desire itself. And therefore it is not to be  
supposed, in either Case, that he should  
subject us to inevitable Delusion and Dis-  
appointment. Had he intended us no-  
thing beyond this Life, he would never  
have drawn us irresistibly into such false  
Hopes, and fallacious Desires.—Besides;  
were the Necessity of this Desire to be  
considered as absolute, and every way in-  
dependent of the Divine Will, still the  
Argument would hold good. For what-  
ever is absolutely necessary, must be just  
and right in itself; and, by Consequence,  
an Object of God's Approbation. But

*Fifthly*, That the Soul of Man will sur-  
vive this present Life, may be further ar-  
gued from the Strength of those benevo-  
lent Affections which God has planted in  
it, Affections that knit Mankind together,  
and produce all the sacred Ties of Affinity,  
Consanguinity, and Friendship. These  
Affections improved and heightened in  
virtuous Characters, by a continual Ex-  
change of good Offices; by real Worth,  
mutual Complacency, and reciprocal Es-  
teem; from that Union of Minds, that  
sacred

sacred Tie of Friendship, which adorns SERM.  
and dignifies our Species, and contributes XIX.  
so highly to the Honour and the Happiness of human Life. The Root of it lies deep in our Nature, and the strongest Principles within us concur to lead us into it. What mean then such Propensions and Dispositions? And whence comes it to pass that we are so many ways prompted to strengthen these Bands, and draw them as close as possible? If this present State, where our *Days* are only *as an hand-breadth*, and our *Life vanishes as a Vapour*, be the whole of our Existence; it must seem extremely hard to account for the Principles and Provisions we are speaking of. Can Men be required by the Impulses of Nature, and the Precepts of Virtue, to form such close and cordial Confederacies; to build up the fairest and firmest Friendships, whose *Foundations are in the Dust*? When Death divides the nearest Relations, and the dearest Friends, what is it that renders such a Separation tolerable, and administers real Support and Consolation? Is it not the Expectation of meeting again in another and a better World? But if this Life was our All, and Death our utter Destruction; how  
C c 2                      dreadful,

SERM. dreadful, how insupportable would it be?

XIX. How would it rack Men's Hearts to see  
 before their Eyes a total Dissolution both  
 of Friend and Friendship; and to find  
 themselves just parting, never to meet  
 more? Had therefore our Maker designed  
 us for this Life only, he would, in all Pro-  
 bability, have given us cooler Affections,  
 and weaker Attachments; and thereby  
 have prevented the terrible Anxieties a-  
 bove-mentioned. And indeed such strong  
 Ligaments can never be fit for Creatures of  
 so short a Duration. — Again, we find in  
 our Minds a powerful Principle of Grati-  
 tude towards Benefactors; more especi-  
 ally our Supreme, the Author and Giver  
 of all Good. Him we are bound, by all  
 the Ties of Nature, and Reason, and Re-  
 ligion, to reverence and *love with all our*  
*Hearts, and with all our Souls.* We are  
 every way excited, by a due Contempla-  
 tion of his infinite Perfections, to frame  
 the most amiable Ideas of him, and to  
 work up our Minds to the highest Pitch  
 of Esteem and Veneration: To consider  
 the Greatness of his Power, the Excellence  
 of his Majesty, the Depth of his Wisdom,  
 and the Glory of his Goodness; how many  
 and various his Benefits, how diffusive  
 and

and constant his Bounty; till our Thoughts SERM.  
are filled, and our Hearts enflamed, with XIX.  
the Lustre, and Beauty, and Grandeur of  
the Object; and all our Faculties con-  
spire to engage and fix us in the Admira-  
tion of it. And to what End these mighty  
Obligations, and powerful Attractions?  
Why must we exert our Faculties, and  
raise our Affections, to the highest Pitch,  
in meditating on the supreme Being, and  
admiring and adoring his boundless Per-  
fections; if, after a very imperfect Ac-  
quaintance, all our Hopes are at an End,  
and the holy Flame is soon to expire,  
and be extinguished for ever? Could so  
great and important a Preparation be re-  
quired for any Purposes of this short State?  
Or would our bountiful Creator bring us  
into Being, fit us for a Participation of  
the sovereign Good, and when we had  
just begun to taste it, snatch us away, and  
reduce us to our original nothing? Had  
he intended us for this Life only, he  
would rather have concealed from us, as  
much as possible, this glorious Object;  
than set it before us, and draw us to it,  
to so very little Purpose. We may safely  
therefore conclude that such natural Pro-  
pensions and Tendencies plainly point out



SERM. another State, and can never end in Fru-  
XIX. stration and Disappointment. Were it  
otherwise, an *Acquaintance with God* would  
be so far from yielding us *Peace* and Com-  
fort, that it would afflict us beyond Mea-  
sure, and drive us into utter Despair.

*Sixtly*, and lastly, Another Proof, and  
that a very obvious one, arises from the  
Suggestions of Conscience; which is conti-  
nually foreboding a Future State, and  
urging it powerfully on the Minds of  
Men. It speaks so clearly and constant-  
ly in behalf thereof, and is so plain and  
peremptory in its Declarations, that its  
Testimony ought not to be rejected; and  
indeed cannot, without great Violence  
done to the Frame and Constitution of  
our own Minds. The Soul of Man is  
not only apt to smart under a Sense of  
Guilt, but is also liable to secret Mis-  
givings, and painful Apprehensions of  
what is to follow. When a Man has  
notoriously violated the Laws of Heaven,  
or the Dictates of right Reason, his Con-  
science not only rebukes him for it, but  
is frequently spreading before his Eyes the  
Terrors of Futurity, and the sad Appre-  
hensions of a miserable Doom. On the  
other Hand, when a Man has maintain-

ed his Innocence, and held fast his Integrity; when he has carefully discharged his Duty, and lived up to the Dignity of his Nature; his Conscience not only applauds him for it, but cheers his Heart with Assurances of a future Recompence, and pleasing Expectations of a happy hereafter. Now if there be no real Foundation for these Things; if this Man's Hopes, and the other Man's Fears, are altogether groundless and chimerical; what Account is to be given of either? How came they to spread so wide, and be so deeply rooted in human Nature? — This Argument seems equally conclusive, whether we mean by Conscience merely the Operation of our intellectual Faculty, or an instinctive Principle superadded thereto. For, upon either Supposition, we are manifestly so framed, as naturally and unavoidably to fall into such a Persuasion, and fix in it. Nay, when Sin and Wickedness have made it Mens Interest to shake it off, and to wish and strive against it as much as possible; they can seldom or never accomplish it. The Expectation of a Future State sticks fast in their Minds; haunting and terrifying them, in spite of all their Arts and Endeavours

SERM.  
XIX.

SERM. deavours to the contrary. Whatever Means  
XIX. may be used, Conscience is never to be  
quite silenced; and very often it speaks so  
loudly and awfully, as to startle the Sinner,  
and make him tremble in the midst of his  
vicious Pursuits, and criminal Enjoyments.  
What then can be the Meaning of these  
natural Anticipations? If there be nothing  
to come hereafter, how strangely is Man  
amused, and how unaccountably misled?  
All Appearances without him, and every  
Principle within him conspire to deceive  
him. If the Grave was his utmost Limit,  
why should he find himself under a Ne-  
cessity of looking beyond it? To what  
End were such clear Prospects opened, and  
such strong Expectations kindled? By  
what strange Fate is he compelled to  
*walk in a vain Shew, and disquiet himself in*  
*vain?* But the Truth is, such a Supposi-  
tion is destitute of all manner of Founda-  
tion; as being directly repugnant both to  
the Nature of God and Man; as will fur-  
ther appear hereafter. Whatever Consci-  
ence presages, whatever uncorrupted Rea-  
son suggests, may securely be relied on,  
and considered as the Voice of him, who  
can never disappoint his Creatures; or  
falsify those Expectations which he has  
given

given them. And indeed 'tis Impiety to SERM.  
suppose that infinite Wisdom cannot go- XIX.  
vern the World without the Help of Fal-   
lacy and Fiction.

This Argument drawn from natural Conscience will appear yet stronger, if we consider the Extent and Universality of it. It is not a Notion or an Impulse that prevails here and there, at some certain Times, and some particular Parts of the World: The Voice of it has been heard in all Ages and in all Nations; and its Convictions spread over the Face of the whole Earth. Scarce an Exception to be found even among the most uncivilized and barbarous People. There is indeed, and has been all along, a great Difference in Mens Ideas of a Future State, according to the Lights received among them, and the Degrees of their Improvement; but the Doctrine itself, in some Dress or other, has universally prevailed. Which plainly shews it to be, in the strictest Sense of the Word, natural; as arising from the Frame and Constitution of our Minds, and the genuine Principles of Humanity. Was it not founded on Nature, and perfectly agreeable to unprejudiced Reason, how should it ever be so deeply rooted in the Minds of Men? Even  
of



SERM. of the best and \* wisest men, in a more  
XIX. peculiar manner; and those too destitute  
of supernatural Light, and the Benefit of  
Revelation. This Consideration may be  
justly accounted a strong Presumption in  
behalf of the Doctrine before us. For  
certainly it would be very strange, if Mens  
Minds were so framed and turned, that  
even the wisest and worthiest of them  
should naturally run into such Sentiments  
concerning this Matter, as had no Found-  
ation in Truth or Nature. What should  
give Mankind such an invincible Bias to  
Error, such an universal Tendency to De-  
lusion? The more we consider these Things,  
the more we shall be at a Loss to give any  
Account of them, but what either sup-  
poses, or must terminate in, the Truth and  
Reality of a Future State.

\* It is true indeed that we find several of the wiser  
Ancients rejecting the Doctrine of a Future State. But  
what Doctrine, and how understood? The popular  
and poetical Doctrine, dressed up by the fabulous  
Poets according to their own Imaginations. In this  
Sense, and, I believe, this only, was the Doctrine op-  
posed by the Wisdom of Antiquity.



# S E R M O N XX.

Natural and Moral Proofs of a  
Future State.

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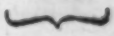
ECCLES. XII. Part of the viith Verse.

*And the Spirit shall return unto God who  
gave it.*

**I**N a former Discourse on these SERM.  
Words, I proposed to consider XX.  
briefly the Proofs and Evidences  
of a Future State, arising from  
natural Reason; and began with those Ar-  
guments which are plainly deducible from  
the Frame and Constitution of our own  
Minds. This Head being then dispatch-  
ed, what now remains to be inquired into,  
is the present Condition and Circum-  
stances of Mankind, considered relatively  
and in Connexion with the known Attri-  
butes and Perfections of the Deity. I  
shall

SERM. shall give a short Account of each, as far  
 XX. as our Subject is concerned ; and having  
 { laid down the Facts, produce the Argument, and point out the Conclusion, which naturally flows from them.

As to the present Condition and Circumstances of Mankind, the Fact is plainly as follows. We find from daily Experience, and general Observation, that there is no regular Distribution of Good and Evil in this Life. In many Respects, *all Things come alike to all, and there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.* Though Virtue naturally tends to Happiness, and Vice is naturally productive of Misery ; yet in this World neither of these Effects constantly happens : Many Things concurring to hinder both the one and the other. We see that good Men are exposed to various Hardships and Misfortunes ; which, on numberless Occasions, they are forced to undergo. So far they oftentimes are from being happy, as might be hoped and expected, that they are deeply distressed, and greatly miserable ; so far from reaping the proper Fruits of their Virtue, as to suffer like Evil-Doers, and be compassed about with a sad Variety of Wretchedness. Nay, it has too often hap-

happened, that their very Virtue has been SERM.  
the Occasion of their Sufferings, and the XX.  
accidental Cause of all their Calamities. 

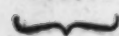
On the other Hand, wicked Men often prosper and flourish in the midst of their Iniquities; not only escaping the fore-mentioned Hardships, but abounding in all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life. Nay their very Wickedness is sometimes the Occasion of their Prosperity; and a great Part of their Lives is perhaps a continued Scene of successful Vice and triumphant Villainy. All Ages and Countries abound in Instances of both these Kinds, and the Observation is familiar and common among Men. — So promiscuously and irregularly are Good and Evil dispensed here below! And indeed this has been at all times so remarkable, that many ill-advised Men have rashly taken Occasion from hence to call in question either divine Providence, or the divine Perfections: But on very weak Grounds, as will be seen afterwards.

In the mean time, however difficult it may have been to account for the Providential Dispensations of this Life, most certain it is, that God's moral Character is, and must be, perfectly clear and unspotted.



SERM.

XX.



ted. He necessarily approves Virtue, and disapproves Vice, because the one is essentially amiable, and the other absolutely odious in its own Nature. Conformably hereto, he is perpetually directed by the sacred Rule of Truth and moral Fitness in all his Proceedings, and in all his Dealings with his Creatures. A Being of infinite Wisdom, must, at all times, infallibly act according to the Reason of Things, and the Right of every Case, because there is always a Motive, a powerful Motive for so doing, arising from the intrinsic Worth and Excellence of such Actions; and because, on the other Hand, there can be no possible Motive to induce God, on any Occasion, to deviate from this divine Rule.—Frail Man indeed is very much governed by Affections and Passions, and those alas! often irregular; but his Maker being entirely void of all Affection, can only be influenced by Reason and Rectitude; from which there is nothing to withdraw him, and to which he is therefore immoveably attached. The Consequence of which is, the perfect Righteousness of his Government, and the inviolable Equity of all his Dispensations.—Two other Particulars relating to our Subject

Subject I shall only just mention, as being SERM.  
universally acknowledged and understood. XX.

The one is, that God is privy to our whole Conduct, and intimately acquainted with all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions; and the other, that the Lot and Condition of every Creature is altogether dependent on him; Good and Evil being lodged in his Hands, and his Power of dispensing them absolute and uncontrollable. — These Truths being premised, I shall now endeavour to shew how we are to argue from them, in order to a clear and satisfactory Proof of the great Point before us. And here we shall find, that, supposing our Souls to perish with our Bodies, the whole Scene of Things here below is utterly unaccountable, and indeed directly repugnant to the moral Perfection of the Deity.

If then Virtue be in itself really better and more deserving than Vice, it undeniably follows that good Men have a better Title to Favour than wicked Men; their Conduct being intrinsically more amiable and meritorious. And that Virtue is really thus preferable, is, to all intelligent Beings, as evident as the Difference between Light and Darkneſs. And if to  
all

SERM. all intelligent Beings, much more to the

XX. Supreme; whose *Eye* is perfectly *pure*, and  
his Judgment unprejudiced and infallible. Virtue therefore is secure of his Approbation; and by Consequence, virtuous Men of his Favour. For Goodness in the Action is Desert in the Agent; and Desert in the Agent is a Title that can never possibly be rejected by an all-righteous Governor. There can be no better or stronger Reason given, why God should favour one Man, and discountenance another; than that the one is virtuous, and the other vicious. Nay, if our Ideas may be trusted, it is the only one that can finally have any Weight with so perfect a Judge. Most certain therefore it is, that God will treat Men accordingly; judging them according to their Works, and distinguishing the Righteous from the Wicked in a most signal manner; conformably to moral Truth, and the eternal Reason of Things. This, I say, will most assuredly be done at some time or other. But it is not done in this Life, as we have already observed and acknowledged; and therefore there will certainly be another. Since at present the Wicked frequently prosper, and the Righteous fall into Distress, contrary  
to

to the Deserts of the one, and the Deme-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
 rits of the other; it plainly follows that <sup>XX.</sup>  
 there must and will be a Future State, to  
 adjust this Irregularity, and rectify the  
 Disorders occasioned by it. Without  
 question, God has wise Reasons for dis-  
 pensing Good and Evil promiscuously in  
 this World; and some of them we know:  
 But without a Future State he could have  
 none at all. Nay, such a Proceeding  
 would, in that Case, be directly repugnant  
 to all the Reason in the World. Was  
 there to be no Life hereafter, every Man  
 would undoubtedly be happy or unhappy  
 here in Proportion to his Virtues or Vices.  
 All the Events and Dispensations of Pro-  
 vidence would turn upon this Hinge, and  
 the Blessings of Heaven be distributed by  
 this Rule. But since we find it in Fact  
 very much otherwise, the Doctrine before  
 us seems as clear and certain, as that God  
*loveth Righteousness, and hateth Iniquity.*

Here perhaps it may be alledged, that  
 the best Men, notwithstanding their Vir-  
 tues, have transgressed more or less, and  
 are therefore Sinners in the Sight of God:  
 That upon this Account they have no  
 Right to complain of their present Hard-  
 ships and Sufferings, supposing these Suf-  
 ferings



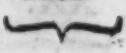
SERM. ferings not to exceed the Proportion of  
XX. their Demerits. To this I answer, that  
however this Allegation may serve to stop  
the Mouths, and silence the Murmurs of  
unhappy Men, it no way affects the Argu-  
ment before us ; which is drawn from the  
moral Perfection of the Deity, and that  
Rule of Righteousness by which he must  
necessarily be supposed to proceed in all his  
Dispensations. The best Men we are told,  
have failed and fallen short of their Duty,  
and are therefore justly punishable at any  
time. Be it so. But have not wicked  
Men failed and offended much more ; and  
therefore deserved much greater Punish-  
ment ? Supposing then no Future State,  
how comes it to pass that they are not  
punished, constantly punished in this  
World, in proportion to their Demerits ?  
If the former be just and fit, do we not plain-  
ly see that the latter is much more so ? To  
*execute Sentence speedily* on good Men, be-  
cause they have sometimes erred and done  
amiss ; and at the same time quite over-  
look the Crimes of notorious Sinners, is  
impossible to be reconciled with any Idea  
of moral Truth. Whatever Reason be  
assigned for the immediate Punishment of  
those Delinquents who are least guilty,  
must

must needs hold much stronger in respect SERM.  
of those who are most guilty. And there- XX.  
fore, excluding a Life to come, no wick-  
ed Man would ever have prospered in this.  
And the Reason is, because a righteous  
and perfect Governor can never act arbi-  
trarily, or capriciously; but will always  
follow the Rule of Equity, and the Right  
of the Case. It must indeed be confessed,  
that in very many Cases, we cannot pre-  
sume to judge of the Grounds and Rea-  
sons of the Divine Conduct: But in the  
present Case they are so plain, and clear,  
and cogent, that if there be any Truth in  
our Faculties, and Virtue and Vice be real  
Things, there is no room for Doubt, or  
the least Suspicion of Error. God will  
assuredly manifest his Righteousness in the  
most publick manner, and redress the Con-  
fusions of this present Life.

Should it be further urged, that the  
Sufferings of the Righteous are compen-  
sated by that Serenity of Mind, and Self-  
satisfaction which their Virtue affords  
them; and that therefore there is no Oc-  
casion for a Future State to make them  
amends; the Answer is as follows. It is  
indeed readily granted, that Virtue is al-  
ways amiable, always beneficial in its own

SERM. Nature; and would be greatly so in favour-

XX. able Conditions and Circumstances. But in  
the Case we are speaking of, its principal  
Comforts vanish, and the Enjoyment of it  
dwindles to almost nothing. Supposing a  
Man both virtuous and prosperous; he  
could not be accounted happy, had he no  
Prospect beyond the Grave. Neither out-  
ward Advantages, nor inward Improve-  
ments, could avail him much, if he stood  
so near the Brink of Destruction, and ex-  
pected so soon a total Dissolution both of  
Soul and Body. But this is not the Case  
before us; we are speaking of a good  
Man very unhappy in this World, and  
deeply distressed; surrounded with Grievs  
and Calamities, and perhaps his whole  
Life a continued Scene of Sorrow and  
Tribulation. Here then the Question is,  
Whether, without a Future State, his  
Virtue be able to make him ample Amends  
for all his Sufferings; to heal the Wounds  
of Misfortune, and support him sinking  
under a Load of Adversity. Alas! this  
is so far from being the Truth of his Case,  
that he is almost intirely disqualified to re-  
ceive any Enjoyment, or any Comfort  
from his Virtue. Extremity of Pain and  
Grief will admit of no Comfort but what  
beams

beams from above. And if the Windows SERM.  
of Heaven were quite shut, what could a XX.  
good Man, in such a Condition, do more,   
than sit down disconsolate, and abandoned to Sorrow and Despair? But is not Virtue, in itself, fair, and lovely, and full of Charms? True; but he is not at Leisure, not in a Condition, to attend to them: And if he was, the more lovely he found it, the more it would grieve him to think, that he had no Hopes of living to enjoy it; excepting the poor Remainder of a short and precarious Life.—Can then a righteous God leave virtuous Men thus destitute; or bring them into the World for such a Purpose as this? Impossible. Such a Proceeding appears quite inconsistent even with human Goodness; much more with Divine.

But further; it may deserve to be considered, that Part of our Species are cut off before they are capable of either contracting Guilt, or even knowing the Difference between Vice and Virtue. Among these doubtless there are some whose Portion of Evil exceeds their Good; whose little Lives are almost filled up with Pain, and Suffering, and Lamentation. Now if these Hardships are to be made up abundantly

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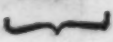
SERM. dantly in another Life, there is no Difficul-  
XX. ty at all in the Case. But supposing no  
Future State, it seems not only difficult,  
but utterly impossible to be accounted for;  
since, on this Supposition, their very Exist-  
ence is a Calamity, an Injury, a Curse. It  
is not conceivable that the all-wise and all-  
perfect Creator should produce any Beings  
in vain; much less that he should produce  
them for such an End as is worse than  
none at all. I will not presume to say,  
that the Communication of Good is the  
sole End of the Creation; but one End,  
one chief End, we plainly perceive it  
must have been: And therefore we may  
be assured that no Creatures can be sent  
into the World with a quite contrary  
View; neither can any be treated, with-  
out any Demerit of their own, so hardly  
and rigorously, as to give just Cause for  
doubting of such a Conclusion. If then  
the foregoing Case be really Fact, as can-  
not I think be denied, or disputed; it  
affords, of itself, an unanswerable Proof  
of a Future State.—And if among the A-  
dult Part of Mankind, there are, or have  
been, any so innocent and good, and yet  
so unhappy and wretched, that their Suf-  
ferings have exceeded the Proportion of  
their

their Demerits; the same Consequence SERM.  
will follow, and every such Instance will XX.  
yield an irresistible Argument for the Truth  
of that Doctrine which we have been con-  
sidering. For most certain it is, that God  
can never ordain any Man to suffer more  
than he has deserved, without making him  
full Reparation either here, or hereafter.

Thus then we may safely and justly ar-  
gue from the present Condition and Cir-  
cumstances of Mankind; which without  
a Future State, are plainly repugnant to  
the Divine Attributes; though with a Fu-  
ture State, as plainly and perfectly agree-  
able thereto. For admitting such a State,  
the unequal and irregular Distributions of  
this Life are easily solved, and readily ac-  
counted for: Nay they become not only  
intelligible, but manifestly convenient, suit-  
able and fit; as directly conducing to  
prepare Mankind for such a State, by a  
fuller Exercise and Improvement of every  
Virtue. For a Life to come, it may be,  
and is, highly fitting, that we be trained  
and tutored here in a State of Discipline  
and Probation. Human Virtue may re-  
quire, in order to its Perfection and our  
Happiness, that it be thus tried, prepared  
and purified: And different Minds may

SERM. require different Trials, and various Dis-  
XX. pensations. On which Account we have

no Reason to wonder when we find good Men in great Distress; this being perhaps no more than what is necessary to form an exalted Character; to produce more illustrious Virtue and triumphant Merit. —To *Strangers and Pilgrims, seeking a better Country*, and travelling to their appointed Home, no Difficulties or Distresses on the Road can seem either unnatural, or intollerable; especially when they have the Pleasure and the Encouragement to know, that their own final Advantage will be thereby promoted. Since then our Condition and Circumstances here below, are no other than what might be expected, supposing a Future State; this may be looked on as a further Presumption of the Reality of such a State. And thus our present Life will be considered, what it really is, a Nursery for the next; where we are to be properly educated, and carefully disciplined, for a more durable and blissful State. But on the other Hand, if we exclude Futurity, and give up all our Hopes and Pretensions beyond the Grave; this present Life becomes, in the Eyes of thinking Men, all Darkness, Discomfort, and

and Perplexity; a sad Scene of desperate SERM.  
Disorder, and inextricable Confusion. This, XX.  
I have shewn, can never be the Case of   
Mankind, while they are under the Go-  
vernment of infinite Wisdom and Good-  
ness.—Upon the Whole, whether we con-  
sider the Nature and Condition of Man,  
or the Nature and Perfections of his Maker,  
we find plain Indications, and solid Proofs  
of the important Doctrine now before us.

What remains to be considered is, whe-  
ther or no the Future State here treated of  
will be of perpetual Duration. It does not  
indeed necessarily follow, that because the  
Soul survives the Body, therefore it must  
exist for ever. For doubtless it must al-  
ways be in the Creator's Power to put a  
Period to its Existence; and therefore its  
Immortality entirely depends on his good  
Will and Pleasure. And if this Will has  
been revealed, as God be thanked it has,  
it must needs be peculiarly fitting to have  
Recourse to that Revelation; as will be  
observed afterwards. However at present  
let us go on with the Evidence of natural  
Reason; which, even as to this Point de-  
serves our Attention. Since then God is  
pleased to prolong the Soul's Existence af-  
ter Death, and provide for it another  
State,



SERM. State, as appears from a great Variety of  
XX. Proofs; it follows from thence, with high  
Degrees of Probability, that he will always continue its Being, and suffer it to enjoy that Immortality which seems to be the Privilege of its Nature. The Force of that Argument which we have just examined, concerning the Sufferings of the Innocent, and the Adversities of the Righteous, does not indeed extend thus far; because another Life of a limited Duration may undoubtedly be sufficient to compensate both. Nevertheless we have even from Reason, good Grounds to hope that our next Life will be unlimited and endless. I shall content myself at present with mentioning these two Things. First, That as far as our Ideas reach, no good Reason can be assigned why God should interpose to prevent the Immortality of the Soul; nothing of this sort having ever been urged, or produced, with the least Appearance or Colour of Probability. And Secondly, Good Reasons may be assigned for the contrary Supposition. The Ends of the Creation, as far as we know them, are confessedly the Glory of God, and the Good and Happiness of his Creatures.

Now

Now the longer good Men are suffered to SERM. exist in an happy State, the more they XX. must needs be blessed, and God be glorified; and by the Perpetuation of such a State, we plainly perceive that the same great Ends will be promoted for ever.— But further; these Reasons against Annihilation will not only eternally hold good, but be continually gathering new Force and Strength. The longer virtuous Men live, in such a State, the fitter they must be for Life; and therefore we may presume, the less will be the Danger of Extinction. Their Faculties must grow, their Capacities enlarge, and all their Improvements increase, through every Part of Duration. Great Advances must be ever made in Knowledge, and Virtue and Happiness. They must be continually more and more capable of contemplating, admiring, and enjoying the Author of all Good, and the Fountain of all Perfection. To imagine, after this Progress, and these Exaltations of their Nature, that God should cut the Thread of their Existence, and put an End to their Beings, is to suppose him acting, as far as we can judge, quite contrary to the Reason of Things, and

SERM. and the chief Ends of the Creation. For  
XX. it seems very evident to our Understand-

ings, that much more Happiness is producible by a Grant of Immortality, than by any Succession of Spirits temporary and mortal; forasmuch as the Happiness of the Blessed must naturally rise in a very high Proportion to the length of their Existence.—Again; by Parity of Reason, it might as well be concluded, that God will some time or other annihilate the Angels, and destroy the whole Host of Heaven, as that he should take away the Existence of *just Men made perfect*. There will be, both for Men and Angels an Employment adequate to the Eternity we are speaking of. They may search for ever into the Divine Perfections, and Divine Workmanship, without being able to exhaust the Subjects, or even comprehend them. They may copy after God's moral Excellence, striving to approach it nearer and nearer through all Ages; and yet ever remain at an infinite Distance from it. In short, nothing less than Immortality, nothing less than an endless Duration, can suit that transcendent Object, for the Study, Adoration, and Enjoyment of which they

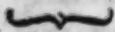
they were, both of them, originally created. SERM.  
 —These Considerations, together with the XX.  
 Arguments before produced from the ~  
 Frame and Constitution of our Minds, appear fully sufficient for the Conviction of unprejudiced Men.—Yet after all, though the Doctrines of a Future State, and the Immortality of the Soul, are supported by a great Variety of clear and convincing Proofs, arising from the mere Light of natural *Reason*; yet it is well and happy for us, that those Proofs are enforced and confirmed by *Revelation*: That we have Assurances from Heaven of our perpetual Existence, and that *Life and Immortality are fully brought to Light in the Gospel*. This gives a powerful Sanction to the Dictates of our Consciencies, and the Decisions of our Understandings. As the Evidences of Reason strengthen our Faith, so the Evidences of Faith establish the Doctrines of Reason; thereby leaving us doubly without Excuse, if we reject the Truth, or suffer our Minds to be drawn into a Disbelief of this most important Article.

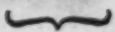
The Time will only permit me to point out very briefly what Use we ought to make



SERM. make of the foregoing Doctrine.—Are we  
 XX. then designed for Immortality, and fitted  
 with suitable Faculties for an endless Duration? How grateful a Sense ought we to have of the Creator's Goodness and Bounty! What Tributes of Praise and Thanksgiving are due for such mighty Blessings, such inestimable Privileges! What Returns of pious Adoration, and religious Reverence, in Will, Word, and Deed!—But more especially ought we to take Care, as the best and most acceptable Expression of our Gratitude, that we make a wise and proper Use of these Blessings; that we walk worthy of the high Expectations, and the glorious Prospect which he has set before us: That we demean ourselves in such manner as becomes those who are *made little lower than the Angels*, and alike destined for Immortality; that by a diligent Application to Wisdom and Virtue we improve our Minds as much as possible, and prepare them for Eternity to the utmost Advantage.—On our Conduct here depends all our Success hereafter. If by evil Practices, and vicious Habits, we lay the Foundations of a miserable Futurity, our Joy will be turned into Grief  
 and

and Terror, and the greatest of all Blessings into the deepest Calamity, and the direst Curse. In the next Life, Vice and Virtue will each produce its own natural Effects, however external Causes may cooperate with them. Every Vice, every evil Habit, that we carry with us into another World, will, like an evil Spirit, haunt us for ever, and persecute us to all Eternity. No Fiends, no Furies, will be able to torment Men hereafter like Sin and Guilt; the Rage and Remorse of which no Words can represent, no Thoughts conceive. On the other Hand, every Grace, every Virtue, every good Habit, will enlarge our Capacities for Happiness, and be a further Preparation for it. They will not only preserve the Soul in perpetual Health and Ease; but prove inexhaustible Sources of Joy and Gladness. They will likewise make it meet to partake of those unspeakable Felicities which God has prepared for the Righteous. And how blessed must that Immortality be, where every thing within, and every thing without, administer Delight, and conspire to augment and establish their Happiness. —Lastly, since there will be another Life,

SERM. Life, and that an eternal one, it must be  
XX.  very absurd to engage our Affections deeply in this; or to be immoderately solicitous about any of its vain and transitory Enjoyments. To set our Hearts on the mean and perishing Objects of this World, is, in Effect, to forget the Privileges of our Nature, and the Joys and Glories of a blessed Immortality. What are Hours, or Days, or Years; nay what is Time itself in Comparison of an eternal Duration! This Life can bear no Proportion to the next; and yet we suffer it almost to engross our Thoughts, and run away with our Affections. We regard this very short Span of Time, as if it was Eternity; and we regard Eternity, as if it were nothing. Our Reason plainly informs us that, supposing a Future State dubious and uncertain, still we ought to provide for the important Chance, and become Adventurers for another World. But since we have all the Evidence and Assurance that can, in Reason, be expected, or even desired; what Words are able to express the Folly, or rather Frenzy of those, who slight such a Good, and *neglect so great Salvation!*—To conclude: If the greatest  
and

and most durable Happiness that we are SERM.  
capable of wishing, be allowed to merit **XX.**  
our Attention and Concern ; then have we   
just Cause to bend our Thoughts this way,  
and devote our best Endeavours to the At-  
tainment of it. Our true Interest prompts  
us to withdraw our Affections from the  
fleeting Shadows of this Life ; continual-  
ly exhorting us to moderate our Pursuit of  
*Things temporal, that we finally lose not the*  
*Things which are eternal,*



of a living God  
and most durable happiness in  
capable of winning the reward of  
the Amen and Comfort which has  
not fails to bend our thoughts  
and devote our best efforts to the  
attainment of it. Our first prayer  
is to withdraw our Affections from the  
fading shadows of this life, and  
to fix them on the eternal  
glories of the Kingdom of God.



## SERMON XXI.

The Duty of Benevolence and  
Brotherly Love, and the ill Effects  
of a Party Spirit.

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ROMANS XII. Part of the tenth Verse.

*Be kindly affectioned one to another, with  
Brotherly Love.—*

**T**O secure in some measure, the SERM.  
Observance of this necessary XXI.  
Duty, God has framed Mens  
Minds with suitable Propensi-  
ties, and engaged them by natural In-  
stinct. They are born with kind Affec-  
tions for each other, and cannot divest  
themselves of them, without grossly cor-  
rupting their Nature, and doing great  
Violence to their own Minds. Every  
Man, who is not thus depraved, perceives  
and feels in himself this Disposition;  
prompting him to do good, and upon all

SERM. proper Occasions, stirring him up to Acts  
 XXI. of Kindness. The Sight of any Object in  
 great Distress nearly touches him, and be-  
 fore he has had Time to reflect, he finds  
 himself powerfully moved. His very Spi-  
 rits take the Alarm, and his Heart beats  
 quick with Charity and Compassion. In  
 short, he finds in himself a warm Inclina-  
 tion to relieve the unhappy Person, and  
 is in Pain till he accomplish it. In like  
 manner, tho' it be with less Emotion,  
 he naturally sympathizes with the Happy  
 as well as the Miserable; *rejoicing with*  
*them that rejoice*, as well as *weeping with*  
*them that weep*. He will take a real Plea-  
 sure in the Prosperity of others, and be  
 delighted with every Instance of good  
 Fortune that befalls them.—This, I say,  
 is the natural Temper of Mens Minds,  
 which accordingly appears, and shews it-  
 self, in all that are uncorrupted; who ne-  
 ver fail to partake of the Joys and Mis-  
 eries of their Fellow-Creatures. Conscious  
 of this Disposition, we stile it *Humanity*,  
 thereby not only allowing it to belong to  
 our Nature, but appropriating it to our  
 own Species.—It may not perhaps be  
 needless to add, that the Object of these  
 kind Inclinations is also unlimited. We  
 are

are indeed too apt to restrain natural Affection to our Kindred, not only in the Signification of the Word, but in the Exercise of what it means; thereby contracting it into a very narrow Compass. But this is a Corruption of our Nature, as well as of our Language. For natural Affection certainly extends, though in a different Degree, to our whole Species, and prompts us to embrace Mankind with universal good Will. And this is agreeable to the Sense of my Text, where the Apostle directs this *natural Affection* to be exercised and exerted towards *one another*; and moreover requires us to cherish it in this Latitude, and *take Pleasure in it*. For so the \* Original most properly signifies. — This being premised, I beg Leave to consider briefly, what Obligations we lie under, as Men, and as Christians, to cultivate and improve these kind Affections. And

1<sup>st</sup>, I would enquire into the *Reasonableness* of the Duty. That the Esteem and Affection of our Fellow-Creatures is a real Good, needs no other Proof, than every Man's own Experience. If we

\* Εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργον.



SERM. consider it abstractedly from its beneficial Effects, even thus we may discover  
XXI. it to have an intrinſick Value; and that because it is naturally grateful to the Mind that poſſeſſes it, which of itſelf is a ſufficient Reason for its being ſo generally deſired and prized. However, it becomes much more valuable by thoſe Benefits and Services that flow from it; Eſteem and Good-will are naturally accompanied with an Inclination to perform good Offices. Whenever therefore we are in Poſſeſſion of the former, we think ourſelves in ſome meaſure entitled to the latter; and for the Sake both of the one and the other, we all covet the Affections of other Men, and are deſirous of recommending ourſelves to their Favour and Friendſhip. From hence it follows by the plaineſt Rule of Reason and Equity, that we ought to bear Good-will towards them: For how can we expect that others ſhould be well-affected to us, if we be diſaffected, or even indifferent towards others? In like manner, how can we pretend to receive Kindneſſes and Benefits, if we reſuſe, on a proper Occaſion to confer them? Suppoſing Abilities and Opportunities equal, they muſt needs have the ſame Title to our  
good

good Offices, that we have to theirs; be-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
cause no Reason or Plea can possibly be XXI.  
alledged by us, but what may equally be  
alledged by them. The Obligations there-  
fore between us, are, and must be reci-  
procal, and by Consequence all Men are  
obliged to be kindly affectioned, and  
friendly to each other. But,

2dly, We may perceive even a *Necessity*  
of practising this Duty, in the very Con-  
dition and Circumstances of our Being.  
Man is by Nature weak and indigent, and  
not capable alone of making any tolera-  
ble Provision for his own Welfare; he is  
liable to many Evils which he cannot  
redress; exposed to many Wants which  
he is not able to supply, and incumbered  
with many Desires which he knows not  
how to gratify. In all these Respects he  
stands in need of the Protection or Assist-  
ance of his Fellow-Creatures, and the  
same helpless Condition being common  
to all Mankind, necessarily fixes the whole  
Species in a State of Dependence upon  
one another. Hence we find, that they  
ever had Recourse to Society, as the com-  
mon Refuge of human Infirmities; where,  
by a mutual Communication of Service,  
and Interchange of good Offices, they

SERM. might obtain those Comforts of Life which  
XXI. were not to be met with in Solitude. But  
how could this Point be gained, or how  
should Society turn to any Account, without those kind Affections, and that friendly Disposition, which we are considering? If Men were generally disinclined to one another, if, instead of Kindness and Affability, they received each other with Aversion and Disdain, if they were morose, and unfociable, contentious, and quarrelsome, prone to give Offence, and commit Wrongs, and yet impatient of the least Injury, and implacable in their Resentments: If, I say, such a Temper as this generally prevailed, who sees not that Society would be a Curse, instead of a Blessing? Upon this Supposition the best and wisest Thing that Men could do, would be to break up and disperse, to return into Solitude, and even hide themselves in a Desert. — But without these Extremities, it is evident that the Happiness of any Community is disturbed and diminished, in Proportion to the Unkindness and Ill-will that arise in it. And even a bare Indifference, as far as it extends, defeats the End of Society, and renders it useless to Mankind.

*and the ill Effects of a Party Spirit.*

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Mankind. If we turn the Supposition the other Way, we may discover,

SERM.  
XXI.

3dly, The great *Advantage* of a benevolent Disposition. Let us then suppose a Society flourishing in Peace, and cemented by Love; where all the Members were inviolably attached to the publick Good, and harmoniously conspired in the Service thereof; where unfeigned Goodwill, and undissembled Affection, universally prevailed; where every Man was a sincere Friend to every Man; in a Word, where all Men vigorously and chearfully exerted themselves in Acts of Kindness, and Labours of Love: What could be more beneficial, or more delightful, than such a Temper, and such a Practice? What could sooner, or better, or more effectually, advance and establish the publick Happiness, and the Welfare of every Individual? The very Idea of such a Society carries a Proof along with it of the Point before us, and presents to our View innumerable Pleasures and Advantages, which, alas! we can only enjoy in Speculation.—And as such a Disposition has a happy Influence on Society (which in Fact is always proportionable to the Prevalence of it) so it produces



SERM. duces suitable Effects in the Minds of all  
XXI. who are blessed with it. For not to mention that Peace and Tranquillity which must necessarily arise from the Absence of many turbulent and tormenting Passions, it may be laid down as a certain Truth, that so much Benevolence is in Reality so much Happiness; every Exercise of it is naturally pleasing to him who is truly possessed of it, and the higher it rises, and the further it extends, the more delightful it becomes. Generous Actions are a perpetual Gratification to a generous Spirit, and the charitable Man is ever feasting upon his own Charities: They often enjoy, in doing Good, a greater, and more exquisite Pleasure, than the most refined Voluptuary ever tasted.—But the good Man's Satisfaction is not confined within the narrow Sphere of his own Abilities. Whatever Good is done, or whatever Good is received, if it fall within the Compass of his Observation, or come to his Knowledge, he enjoys it in Reflection, and it becomes a real Addition to his own Happiness. The very Blessings of Heaven that descend everywhere in such Plenty and Profusion, all administer to his Comfort, and contribute to

to the Increase of his Treasure. Where-  
ever they may directly fall, they are sure  
to rebound upon him; forasmuch as he  
continually rejoices at them, and is ever  
well pleased with his Neighbour's Suc-  
cess. In short, he thus partakes of all  
the Prosperity that he sees or hears of,  
and is a Sharer of every Man's Joy.

4thly, We may proceed to consider the  
*Excellence* of this benevolent Disposition.  
And most certainly nothing can be more  
agreeable to the Dignity of our Natures,  
nothing can more improve or adorn our  
Minds, nothing can raise them to a higher  
or nobler Pitch. What can be better,  
what more amiable, than kind Affections,  
and worthy Actions? Those shining Cha-  
racters in History, which have been trans-  
mitted down from Age to Age with so  
much Applause, and charmed every Rea-  
der; what Ingredients do they consist of?  
Are they not made up of Benevolence,  
Kindness, Humanity, Generosity, publick  
Spirit, and the Love of Mankind? Ani-  
mated by such Principles as these, the  
Benefactors of Antiquity performed the  
most illustrious Actions, surmounting all  
Difficulties, and chearfully sacrificing  
Wealth, Ease, Liberty, and Life itself,  
to

SERM.

XXI.

SERM. to the publick Good. What Wonder, then,  
 XXI. if such Names be covered with Glory,  
 and attract the Admiration of all Posterity? And in Truth there is something so beautiful, so lovely, in Beneficence and Kindness, that all Men of honest and undepraved Minds are naturally very much delighted with such eminent Examples of them.—But the Excellence of this Temper chiefly consists in its Conformity to the Goodness and Perfection of God himself, who <sup>a</sup> *maketh his Sun to rise on the Just and on the Unjust.* <sup>b</sup> *Who loads us with his Benefits, and crowns us with Mercy and loving Kindness.* Who showers down on all his Creatures Blessings and Bounties in the greatest Abundance, and is every Moment communicating Good, and diffusing Happiness through a whole Universe, and all this without a Possibility of any other View, than that of doing Good, and making happy.—Whatever then is the best Imitation, and the nearest Resemblance of this Goodness that Men are capable of, must needs be most worthy, and most excellent, and conduce in the highest Degree to the raising, improving, and ac-

<sup>a</sup> Mat. v. 45.<sup>b</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 19. ciii. 4.

completing our Natures. And this is SERM.  
the very Case of the Virtue I am treating XXI.  
of. For certainly nothing can be more  
divine than Love and Charity; nothing  
more Godlike than doing Good. From  
whence we may justly conclude, not only  
that it is God's Will we should imitate  
him herein, but that we should be parti-  
cularly careful to attain so great an Ex-  
cellence, to arrive at so divine a Perfec-  
tion. Thus far, then, our Obligations  
reach as we are *Men*, directed only by  
the Light of Nature, and instructed by  
Reason.

We are next to consider ourselves as  
Christians, in which View we shall find  
our Obligations carried to a much greater  
Height. Those *kind Affections* with which  
Nature and Reason jointly inspire us, are  
by Christianity exalted into *Brotherly Love*;  
we are not to look upon ourselves as bound  
only by the Ties of Humanity; we are  
not to consider our Fellow-Christians  
barely as Partakers of the same Nature,  
but as *Brethren*, in the highest and most  
sacred Sense; as Members of the same  
Body, as Partakers of the same Redemp-  
tion, and Coheirs of everlasting Life. These  
Considerations bind us in a peculiar man-  
ner



SERM. *ner to Brotherly Love.* And accordingly  
 XXI. the Gospel every where enjoins and incul-  
 cates it with great Strictness. <sup>a</sup> *This is the*  
*Message, says the Apostle, that ye heard*  
*from the Beginning, that we should love one*  
*another.* And indeed it is evident that  
 Christ and his Apostles, from the Begin-  
 ning to the End of their Ministry, breathed  
 nothing but the purest Love, and most  
*fervent Charity.* They earnestly exhorted  
 and urged Men to it, and laid the utmost  
 Stress on it upon all Occasions.—It is  
 stiled by the Apostle <sup>b</sup> *the royal Law*; it  
 is represented as <sup>c</sup> *the End of the Command-*  
*ment,* or, in other Words, as the main  
 Scope and Drift of the Christian Institu-  
 tion. It is said to be <sup>d</sup> *the Bond of Per-*  
*fectness,* and <sup>e</sup> *the fulfilling the Law.* Our  
 blessed Saviour not only most emphati-  
 cally calls it <sup>f</sup> *his Commandment,* but makes  
 Choice of it as the most proper Badge and  
 Characteristick of his Followers. <sup>g</sup> *By this,*  
*says he, shall all Men know that ye are my*  
*Disciples, if you love one another.* Thereby  
 plainly informing us, that it is not only  
 an indispensable Duty, but a Virtue of the

<sup>a</sup> 1 John iii. 11.    <sup>b</sup> James ii. 8.    <sup>c</sup> 1 Tim. i. 5.  
<sup>d</sup> Col. iii. 14.    <sup>e</sup> Rom. xiii. 10.    <sup>f</sup> John xv. 12.  
<sup>g</sup> Ibid. xiii. 35.

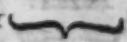
highest Rank, and the most essential Qua- SERM.  
lity of a Christian.—And as Christ has XXI.  
given us such Precepts concerning Love and Charity, so he was himself the highest and most perfect Example of it, that ever appeared in the World. Those Characters, however illustrious, which I hinted at before, were as much beneath his, in all Respects, as the Gentile Morality was inferior to the Doctrines of the Gospel. Whenever we seriously reflect who he was, and what we were, and consider at the same time what he did, and what he suffered, from first to last, for the sinful and unworthy Race of Mankind; we immediately discover that there never was upon Earth any Love like his; a Love so active, so intense, so unlimited, and so divine, that no Words are able to express it, no Thoughts to conceive it.

Having thus considered our Obligations, as Men, and as Christians to perform this Duty; I might proceed to observe, and lament the Deficiency and Disproportion of our Practice. I might also point out the chief Causes and Occasions of it, and endeavour to lay down such Rules as seem to conduce most to the promoting of Benevolence and Brotherly Love; But the Re-

SERM. mainder of my Time not allowing of  
 XXI. many Particulars, I only beg leave to in-  
 ~~~~~ sist upon one, and to offer an Expedi-  
 ent, which tho' perhaps less regarded, yet
 seems to be of very great Importance.

What I mean is, that we would care-
 fully guard our Minds against that *Spirit*
of Party which usually prevails so much
 among us, and to which we seem so un-
 accountably addicted. It must indeed be
 confessed, that it is of late considerably
 abated, and good Reason have we to re-
 joice at it. But then we should not ne-
 glect it upon this account; on the contrary
 we should look upon this as a fair Op-
 portunity of exerting ourselves and ex-
 pelling it quite from among us. Since
 our Distemper has remitted, it may now
 be more easily dealt with. We should
 therefore use our utmost Endeavours to per-
 fect a Cure, and prevent a Relapse. It
 may be justly questioned, whether there
 be any Impediment to Love and Charity
 greater and more powerful than this; and
 therefore nothing is more to be wished
 than an entire Removal of it.

In order whereto we should do well to
 consider, what various Mischiefs and Mife-
 ries attend it, how many Ways it tends to
 disturb

disturb our Happiness, and embitter our SERM. Lives.—And here it were easy to shew, XXI. how unavoidably it destroys the *Peace of*  *our Minds*, by introducing needless Disquietudes and Vexations, by kindling the most troublesome Passions, and blowing up the Coals of Strife and Contention.—It were easy to shew, how deeply it injures our *Reputations*, by occasioning a mutual Propagation of Calumny and Slander; by causing the fairest Actions to be misrepresented and discoloured, by rendering it almost impossible for any Man, with his utmost Endeavours, to give a general Content, or even gain any Approbation out of his own Party.—I might also observe how it tends to corrupt our very *Understandings*; as it infuses into them innumerable Prejudices, and thereby vitiates our Judgments; as it draws them off from the Evidence of Things, and represents to them Questions and Facts in a false Light; as it renders them pliant, and ductile, and easy to be deluded; as it inures them to embrace notorious Falshoods, and digest the most palpable Absurdities.—But more especially we should consider, how ill an Effect it has on our *Morals*. It lessens our Concern for Things

SERM. of great Moment, and increases it for
XXI. Matters of no Consequence. It inclines us
to Bigotry and Superstition. It tends to
confound the very Distinctions of Good
and Evil. It undermines Justice and Mercy,
the main Pillars of all Religion. It roots
up our kind Affections, and good Disposi-
tions; and instead of them fills our Hearts
with Rage and Rancour. In short, this
Party Spirit eats into our Breasts like a
Cancer; corrupts and poisons our best
Humours; and in a great measure de-
vours that Love and Good-will, which is
the chief Ornament of our Minds, and
the Glory of our Natures.

Nor is it less injurious to the Publick,
than private Persons. It is evident from the
Nature of the Thing, and from what has
been already observed, that nothing can
have a greater Tendency to embroil a
State, and throw it into the utmost Dis-
order. As sure as Love and Unity is the
great Bond of Society, so sure is Division
and Strife the Bane of it. Those jarring
Aims, and interfering Motions which are
produced by it, must necessarily occasion
Stops and Breaches among the Wheels of
Government. And if it rise high, and be
of long Continuance, the best and firmest
Consti-

Constitution in the World must at last SERM.
sink under it.—But let us appeal to Fact XXI.
and Experience. Does not this abund-
antly inform us, that where *Party Strife*
is, there is Confusion and every evil Work?
Has it not sometimes thrown us into the
most dangerous Ferments? Has it not put
the Kingdom into Flames, that no body
knew how to extinguish? and which in
spite of all Endeavours, have continued
and raged on to the next Generation?—
It is with good Reason believed, that this
Kingdom can only fall by its own Hands.
So kind have Nature and Providence been
to us; such is our Situation, and so great
our Strength; that if ever we come to
Ruin, if ever we be *brought to Desolation*,
it must be by being *divided against our-*
selves. By that intestine Strife which preys
upon our Vitals, and cuts the very Si-
news of Government.—Next to the Love
of our whole Species, our strongest Obli-
gations are to the Love of our Coun-
try. And accordingly it is deeply rooted
in our Natures, and hardly to be effaced
by Time or Accident. What Pity it is so
noble a Passion should ever degenerate,
and dwindle into Affection for a Party?

SERM. Should it be enquired, what it is that
 XXI. thus straitens our Minds, and contracts
 our Inclinations; I believe this Mischief
 would be found originally owing to Vanity and Self-love. For how comes it to pass that we are so much pleased with those of our own Party? Because they subscribe to our Sentiments, and think as we do. And why are we so much offended at the Adversary? Because he rejects our Opinions, and follows his own. And what does all this amount to, but a Compliment paid to our own Understandings? It is not otherwise to be conceived, how the Opinions of others come to affect us, either with so much Complacency or Displeasure.

To these Considerations give me only Leave to add, what naturally offers itself to our Thoughts at this time. As nothing can be more seasonable, nothing more dutiful; so I humbly suppose, nothing could be more acceptable to our Gracious Sovereign, in this Beginning of his Reign, than for his Subjects to make him a joint Sacrifice of all their remaining Feuds and Animosities. How just and solid a Pleasure would it give him, to see all Discord, all Variance at an End; and the
 Hearts

Hearts of his whole People knit together SERM.
in the Bonds of mutual Affection? Such XXI.
a Period put to our domestick Diffen-
tions, would not only contribute to his
Repose; would not only make his Crown
sit easy upon his Head; but very much
add to the Lustre of it. Nay it would
redound more to his Glory, than holding
the Balance of *Europe*, and being the
awful Umpire of contending Kingdoms.

And as to ourselves, what can be more
beneficial, what more desirable? Are they
not our Differences and Divisions, that
chiefly, at any time, obstruct our Hap-
piness? Is not this the very Evil, that
lately hung over us, like a thick Cloud,
and darkened our Prospect? A Prospect
both then and now filled with such Blef-
signs, as not only intimately affect us, but
promise Security and Happiness to many
distant Generations. If our Laws, our
Liberties, our Religion be dear to us, we
cannot but rejoice to see them so firmly
guarded, and strongly fenced. To see
the Throne filled by a Prince, who along
with the Crown and Dignity of his Royal
Father, inherits his high Qualities, and
Kingly Endowments; who greatly ap-
proves and admires our happy Constitution;
who

SERM. who is cordially devoted to the Welfare of
XXI. his People, and attached to them by Inclination and Affection, no less than by Interest. To see likewise round about the Throne a hopeful, and numerous Progeny, blooming in all the Gifts of Nature, and blessed with all the Advantages of Education; from their Infancy formed to every Thing Praise-worthy, by a Princess of the greatest Virtue, and most consummate Wisdom. These, and the like Blessings, how we may prize, now we have them, I shall not pretend to say; but most certainly if we had them not, we should desire them above all things, and think them of inestimable Value.

Upon the Whole, if we have any Regard to our own Welfare, or the Interest of our Posterity; if we bear any true Love to our King, or our Country; let us make it appear by entirely putting an end to our unhappy Divisions. Let us no longer exasperate each other by virulent Words, and opprobrious Terms of Distinction; by injurious Actions or disobliging Treatment; but *be kindly affectionate one to another with Brotherly Love*. Let us distinguish ourselves no otherwise, than by being perfectly well affected to our excellent

cellent Constitution in Church and State, and to Him who happily presides over both. And let no other Strife be prolonged among us, except who should be most zealous and active in the Service of the Publick. This we may surely do, without engaging in any Party: Provided we do but take Care to live peaceably and charitably with those, who have the Misfortune to be otherwise minded. We are obliged * *in Meekness and Gentleness to instruct those who oppose themselves.* This is the Christian Rule; and no Difference of Opinion how wide soever, can ever justify our Departure from it.—To conclude: Let us unanimously *follow after the Things that make for Peace.* And since we are blessed with the best Constitution, and the purest Religion in the World; and with the fairest Hopes of a long Enjoyment of both: Since Divine Providence has distinguished us by numberless Mercies and Favours, above all the Nations round about us; let us shew ourselves grateful by a wise, a virtuous, and a peaceable Conduct; and study henceforward to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called.*

* 2 Tim. ii. 25.

